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AN

ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY,

Ancient and Modern,

FROM

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST,

TO THE

BEGINNING OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

IN WHICH

THE RISE, PROGRESS, AND VARIATIONS OF CHURCH POWER

ARE CONSIDERED

IN THEIR CONNEXION WITH THE STATE OF LEARNING AND PHILOSOPHY,

AND

THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF EUROPE DURING THAT PERIOD.

BY THE LATE LEARNED

JOHN LAWRENCE MOSHEIM, D. D.

AND CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF GOTTINGEN.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL LATIN, AND ACCOMPANIED WITH NOTES AND CHRONOLOGICAL TABLES.

BY ARCHIBALD MACLAINE, D. D.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

AN ACCURATE INDEX.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR R. BAYNES, 25, IVY-LANE, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1819.

BR
145
M6713
1819
v.1

7453
18/III/90
6 vols
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THE

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

I CANNOT persuade myself, that the complaints we hear frequently of the frivolous nature of the public taste in matters of literature, are so far to be relied on, as to make me despair of a favourable reception of the following work. A HISTORY of the CHRISTIAN CHURCH, composed with judgment, taste, and candour, drawn, with uncommon discernment and industry, from the best sources, enriched with much useful learning and several important discoveries, and connected with the History of Arts, Philosophy, and Civil Government, is an object that will very probably attract the attention of many, and must undoubtedly excite the curiosity of the judicious and the wise. A work of this nature will be considered by the *Philosopher* as an important branch of the history of the human mind, and I need not mention a multitude of reasons that render it peculiarly interesting to the *Christian*. Besides, there has not hitherto appeared, in English, any complete History of the Church, that represents its revolutions, its divisions, and doctrines, with impartiality and truth, exposes the delusions of popish legends, breathes a spirit of moderation and freedom, and, keeping perpetually in the view of the reader the true nature

and design of the Christian religion, points out the deviations from its beautiful simplicity, that have been too frequent among all orders of men, and in all ages of the world.

The following work has the best claim, of any I know, to these characters [*a*]; and its peculiar merit is pointed out, as far as modesty would permit, in the ensuing Preface of its justly celebrated author. The reputation of this great man is very well known. His noble birth seemed to open to his ambition a fair path to civil promotion; but his zeal for the interests of religion, his insatiable thirst after knowledge, and more especially his predominant taste for sacred literature, induced him to consecrate his admirable talents to the service of the church. The German universities loaded him with literary ho-

[*a*] Some time after I had undertaken this translation, I was honoured with a letter from the learned bishop of GLOUCESTER, in which he was so good as to testify his approbation of my design, and to speak of the work I here offer to the public in an English dress in the following manner: 'MOSHEIM's *Compendium is excellent, the method admirable; in short, the only one deserving the name of an Ecclesiastical history. It deserves, and needs frequent notes.*'—I hope this eminent prelate will not take amiss my placing here a testimony that was not designed to be produced in this public manner. It is, however, so adapted to give those who examine recommendations with discernment, a favourable notion of the following work, that I could not think of suppressing it. It is usual, in publishing certain ancient authors, to prefix to them the encomiums they have been honoured with by those whose authority is respected in the republic of letters. I adopt this custom so far as to mention one testimony;—more would be unnecessary; the testimony of a WARBURTON is abundantly sufficient to answer my purpose, and will be justly looked upon as equivalent to a multitude.

nours. The King of DENMARK invited him to settle at *Copenhagen*. The Duke of BRUNSWICK called him from thence to *Helmstadt*, where he received the marks of distinction due to his eminent abilities; filled, with applause, the academical chair of divinity; was honoured with the character of ecclesiastical counsellor to that respectable court; and presided over the seminaries of learning in the duchy of *Wolfembuttle* and the principality of *Blackenburg*. When the late King formed the design of giving an uncommon degree of lustre to the University of *Gottingen*, by filling it with men of the first rank in the literary world, such as a HALLER, a GESNER, and a MICHAELIS, Dr. MOSHEIM was deemed worthy to appear at the head of that famous seat of learning, in the quality of chancellor; and here he died, universally lamented, in the year 1755, and in the sixty-first year of his age. In depth of judgment, in extent of learning, in the powers of a noble and masculine eloquence, in purity of taste, and in a laborious application to all the various branches of erudition and philosophy, he had certainly very few superiors. His Latin translation of the celebrated Dr. CUDWORTH'S *Intellectual System of the Universe*, enriched with large annotations, discovered such a profound acquaintance with ancient philosophy and erudition, as justly excited the admiration of the learned world. His ingenious illustrations of the sacred writings, his successful labours in the defence of Christianity, and the light he cast upon the history

of religion and philosophy by his uninterrupted researches, appear in a multitude of volumes, which are deservedly placed among the most valuable treasures of sacred and profane literature; and the learned and judicious work, that is here presented to the public, will undoubtedly render his name illustrious in the records of religion and letters.

How far justice has been done to this excellent work, in the following translation, is a point that must be left to the decision of those who shall think proper to peruse it with attention. I can say, with the strictest truth, that I have spared no pains to render it worthy of their gracious acceptance; and this consideration gives me some claim to their candour and indulgence, for any defects they may find in it. I have endeavoured to render my translation faithful, but never proposed to render it entirely literal. The style of the original is by no means a model to imitate, in a work designed for general use. Dr. MOSHEIM affected brevity, and laboured to crowd many things into few words; thus his diction, though pure and correct, became sententious and harsh, without that harmony which pleases the ear, and those transitions which make a narration flow with ease. This being the case, I have sometimes taken considerable liberties with my author, and followed the *spirit* of his narrative without adhering strictly to the *letter*. Where, indeed, the Latin phrase appeared to me elegant, expressive, and compatible with the English idiom, I have constantly followed

it; in all other cases, I have departed from it, and have often added a few sentences, to render an observation more striking, a fact more clear, a portrait more finished. Had I been translating CICERO or TACITUS, I should not have thought such freedom pardonable. The translation of a classic author, like the copy of a capital picture, must exhibit not only the *subject*, but also the *manner* of the original; this rule, however, is not applicable to the work now under consideration.

The reader will easily distinguish the *additional* notes of the Translator from the *original* ones of the Author; the references to the latter being included in *crotchets*, while those that indicate the former are marked with a hand, thus (☞).

When I entered upon this undertaking, I proposed rendering the additional notes more numerous and ample, than the reader will find them. I soon perceived that the prosecution of my original plan would render this work too voluminous; and this induced me to alter my purpose. The notes I have given, are not, however, inconsiderable in number; I wish I could say as much with respect to their merit and importance.—I would only hope, that some of them will be looked upon as not altogether unnecessary.

HAGUE,
Dec. 4, 1764.

ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE

SECOND EDITION.

THE favourable reception which the first *edition of this work met with, has encouraged the Translator to employ his utmost care in rendering the* second *still less unworthy of the acceptance of the Public. He has corrected a passage erroneously translated in the second volume, at the* 574*th page of the quarto edition; and he has revised the whole with a degree of attention, which he hopes will secure him against the charge of any other inadvertency. He takes this opportunity of acknowledging the goodness of the learned and worthy* Dr. NEVE *of* Middleton Stoney, *who favoured him with several Notes, and with some hundreds of Additional Articles and Corrections for the* INDEX. *Many of these are inserted in this edition, and an N. subjoined to each, to distinguish them from those of the Translator.*

THE

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

THE different editions of the ELEMENTS OF THE CHRISTIAN HISTORY [*a*] met with such a favourable reception from the public, and the demand for them was so great, that they were, in a little time, out of print. Upon this occasion, the worthy person, at whose expence they had been presented to the public, desired earnestly to give a new edition of the same work improved and enlarged, and thus still more worthy of its gracious acceptance. The other occupations in which I was engaged, and a prudent consideration of the labour I must undergo in the correction and augmentation of a work in which I myself perceived so many imperfections, prevented my yielding, for a long time, to his earnest solicitations. The importunities of my friends at length prevailed upon me to undertake this difficult work; and I have employed assiduously my hours of leisure, during the space of two years, in bringing it to as high a degree of perfection as I am capable of giving it. So that now these Elements of Ecclesiastical History appear under a new form, and the changes they have undergone are certainly advantageous in every respect. I have re-

☞ [*a*] A small work published by Dr. MOSHEIM, many years ago, in two volumes, 12mo.

tained still the division of the whole into certain periods; for though a continued narration would have been more agreeable to my own taste, and had also several circumstances to recommend it, yet the counsels of some learned men, who have experienced the great advantages of this division, engaged me to prefer it to every other method. And, indeed, when we examine this matter with due attention, we shall find, that the author, who proposes comprehending in one work all that variety of observations and facts that are necessary to an acquaintance with the state of Christianity in the different ages of the church, will find it impossible to execute this design, without adopting certain general divisions of time, and others of a more particular kind, which the variety of objects, that demand a place in this history, naturally points out.

And as this was my design in the following work, I have left its primitive form entire, and made it my principal business to correct, improve, and augment it in such a manner, as to render it more instructive and entertaining to the reader.

My principal care has been employed in establishing, upon the most solid foundations, and confirming by the most respectable authority, the credit of the facts related in this history. For this purpose, I have drawn from the fountain head, and have gone to those genuine sources from whence the pure and uncorrupted streams of evidence flow. I have consulted the best authors of every age, and chiefly

those who were contemporary with the events they relate, or lived near the periods in which they happened; and I have endeavoured to report their contents with brevity, perspicuity, and precision. Abbreviators, generally speaking, do little more than reduce to a short and narrow compass, those large bodies of history, that have been compiled from original authors; this method may be, in some measure, justified by several reasons, and therefore is not to be entirely disapproved. From hence nevertheless it happens, that the errors, which almost always abound in large and voluminous productions, are propagated with facility, and passing from one book into many, are unhappily handed down from age to age. This I had formerly observed in several abridgements; and I had lately the mortification to find some instances of this in my own work, when I examined it by the pure lamp of antiquity, and compared it with those original records that are considered as the genuine sources of sacred history. It was then, that I perceived the danger of confiding implicitly even in those who are the most generally esteemed on account of their fidelity, penetration, and diligence; and it was then also that I became sensible of the necessity of adding, suppressing, changing, and correcting several things in the small work which I formerly published, and which has been already mentioned. In the execution of this necessary task, I can affirm with truth, that I have not been wanting in perseverance, industry, or atten-

tion; and yet, with all these, it is extremely difficult to avoid mistakes of every kind, as those who are acquainted with the nature of historical researches abundantly know. How far I have approached to that inaccessible degree of exactness, which is chargeable with no error, must be left to the decision of those whose extensive knowledge of the Christian history entitles them to pronounce judgment in this matter. That such may judge with the more facility, I have mentioned the authors who have been my guides; and, if I have in any respect misrepresented their accounts or their sentiments, I must confess that I am much more inexcusable than some other historians, who have met with and deserved the same reproach, since I have perused with attention, and compared with each other the various authors to whose testimony I appeal, having formed a resolution of trusting to no authority inferior to that of the original sources of historical truth.

In order to execute, with some degree of success, the design I formed of rendering my abridgement more perfect, and of giving the history of the church as it stands in the most authentic records, and in the writings of those whose authority is most respectable, I found myself obliged to make many changes and additions. These will be visible through the whole of the following work, but more especially in the THIRD BOOK, which comprehends the History of the Christian, and particularly of the Latin, or Western church, from CHARLEMAGNE to the rise of

LUTHER, and the commencement of the Reformation. This period of Ecclesiastical History, though it abound with shining examples; though it be unspeakably useful as a key to the knowledge of the political, as well as religious state of *Europe;* though it be singularly adapted to unfold the origin, and explain the reasons of many modern transactions, has nevertheless been hitherto treated with less perspicuity, solidity, and elegance, than any other branch of the history of the church. The number of writers that have attempted to throw light upon this interesting period is considerable, but few of them are in the hands of the public. The barbarous style of one part of them, the profound ignorance of another, and the partial and factious spirit of a third, are such as render them by no means inviting; and the enormous bulk and excessive price of the productions of some of the best of these writers must necessarily render them scarce. It is further to be observed, that some of the most valuable records that belong to the period of Ecclesiastical History now under consideration, lie yet in manuscript in the collections of the curious (or the opulent, who are willing to pass for such,) and are thus concealed from public view. Those who consider these circumstances will no longer be surprised, that in this part of Ecclesiastical History, the most learned and laborious writers have omitted many things of consequence, and treated others without success. Among these, the annalists and other historians, so highly

celebrated by the church of *Rome*, such as BARONIUS, RAYNALDUS, BZOVIUS, MANRIQUES, and WADDING, though they were amply furnished with ancient manuscripts and records, have nevertheless committed more faults, and fallen into errors of greater consequence than other writers, who were by far their inferiors in learning and credit, and had much less access to original records than they were favoured with.

These considerations induce me to hope, that the work I here present to the public, will neither appear superfluous nor useless. For, as I have employed many years in the most laborious researches, in order to acquire a thorough acquaintance with the history of Christianity, from the eighth century downwards, and as I flatter myself, that, by the assistance of books and manuscripts too little consulted, I have arrived at a more certain and satisfactory knowledge of that period, than is to be found in the generality of writers, I cannot but think, that it will be doing real service to Ecclesiastical History to produce some of these discoveries, as this may encourage the learned and industrious to pursue the plan that I have thus begun, and to complete the history of the Latin church, by dispelling the darkness of what is called the *Middle Age*. And indeed I may venture to affirm, that I have brought to light several things hitherto generally unknown, corrected from records of undoubted authority, accounts of other things known but imperfectly, and expressed with much perplexity and confusion, and exposed the

fabulous nature of many events that deform the annals of sacred history. I here perhaps carry too far that self-praise, which the candour and indulgence of the public are disposed either to overlook as the infirmity, or to regard as the privilege, of old age. Those, however, who are curious to know how far this self-applause is just and well-grounded, have only to cast an eye on the illustrations I have given on the subject of CONSTANTINE's *Donation*, as also with respect to the *Cathari* and *Albigenses*, the *Beghards* and *Beguines*, the *Brethren* and *Sisters of the Free Spirit*, (whose pestilential fanaticism was a public nuisance to many countries in *Europe* during the space of four hundred years,) the *Fraticelli*, or *Little Brethren*, the controversies between the *Franciscans* and the *Roman Pontiffs*, the history of BERENGER, and the *Lollards*, and other matters. When my illustrations on these subjects and points of history are compared with what we find concerning them in other writers, it will perhaps appear, that my pretensions to the merit of some interesting discoveries are not entirely without foundation.

These accessions to Ecclesiastical History could not be exhibited with the same brevity which I have observed in treating other subjects, that have already been amply enlarged upon by others; for this would have been incompatible with the information of the curious, who would have received but imperfect and confused notions of these subjects, and would have made me, perhaps, pass for a fabulous

writer, who advanced novelties, without mentioning either my guides or my authorities. I have, therefore, not only explained all those points of history which carry with them an appearance of novelty, or recede considerably from the notions commonly received, but have also confirmed them by a sufficient number of observations and testimonies to establish their credibility on a solid foundation. The illustrations and enlargements, which, generally speaking, carry an air of disproportion and superfluity in an historical abridgement, were absolutely necessary in the present case.

These reasons engaged me to change the plan laid down in my former work, and one peculiar consideration induced me to render the present history more ample and voluminous. The *Elements*, so often mentioned, were designed principally for the use of those who are appointed to instruct the studious youth in the history and vicissitudes of the Christian church, and who stand in need of a compendious text, to give a certain order and method to their prelections. In this view I treated each subject with the utmost brevity, and left, as was natural and fitting, much to the learning and abilities of those who should think proper to make use of these *Elements* in their course of instruction. But, in reviewing this compendious work with a design to offer it anew to the public, I imagined it might be rendered more acceptable to many, by such improvements and additions as might adapt it, not only

to the use of those who teach others, but also of those who are desirous of acquiring, by their own application, a general knowledge of Ecclesiastical History. It was with this view that I made considerable additions to my former work, illustrated many things that had been there obscurely expressed for the sake of brevity, and reduced to a regular and perspicuous order a variety of facts, the recital of which had been more or less attended with perplexity and confusion. Hence it is, that, in the following work, the history of the calamities, in which the Christians of the first ages were involved, and the origin and progress of the sects and heresies which troubled the church, are exhibited with an uncommon degree of accuracy and precision. Hence the various forms of religion, which have sprung from the excessive love of novelty, are represented without prejudice or partiality, and with all possible perspicuity and truth. It is also in consequence of this change of my original design, that I have taken the utmost pains to state more clearly religious controversies, to estimate their respective moment and importance, and to exhibit the arguments alleged on both sides; nor must I omit mentioning the care and labour I have employed in giving an exact narration of the transactions, wars, and enterprising measures of the Roman pontiffs, from the reign of CHARLEMAGNE down to the present times.

Those, therefore, who are prevented from applying themselves to a regular study of Ecclesiastical

History through want of leisure, or by not having at hand the sources of instruction, and are, nevertheless, desirous of acquiring a distinct knowledge of certain events, doctrines, or religious rites, may consult the following work, in which they will find the information they want; and those who are inclined to push their inquiries still further, will see the course they must pursue, and the authors mentioned whom it will be proper for them to peruse.

It would betray an unpardonable presumption in me to imagine, that, in a work whose plan is so extensive, and whose contents are so various, I have never fallen into any mistakes, or let any thing drop from my pen, which stands in need of correction. But as I am conscious to myself of having conducted this undertaking with the most upright intentions, and of having employed all those means that are generally looked upon as the best preservatives against the seduction of error, I would hope that the mistakes I may have committed, are neither so frequent, nor so momentous as to be productive of any pernicious effects.

I might add more; but nothing more is necessary to enable those to judge of this work, who judge with knowledge, impartiality, and candour. I therefore conclude, by offering the just tribute of my gratitude to Almighty God, who, amidst the infirmities of my advanced years, and other pressures under which I have laboured, has supplied me with strength to bring this difficult work to a conclusion.

GOTTINGEN, *March* 23, 1755.

INTRODUCTION.

I. ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY is a clear and faithful narration of the transactions, revolutions, and events, that relate to that large community, which bears the name of JESUS CHRIST, and is vulgarly known under the denomination of the CHURCH. It comprehends both the *external* and *internal* condition of this community, and so connects each event with the causes from which it proceeds, and the instruments which have been concerned in its production, that the attentive reader may be led to observe the displays of providential wisdom and goodness in the preservation of the church, and thus find his piety improved, as well as his knowledge. Definition of Ecclesiastical History.

II. The church, founded by the ministry and death of CHRIST, cannot be represented with more perspicuity and propriety than under the notion of a society, subjected to a lawful dominion, and governed by certain laws and institutions, mostly of a moral and spiritual tendency. To such a society many external events must happen, which will advance or oppose its interests, and accelerate or retard its progress towards perfection, in consequence of its unavoidable connection with the course and revolutions of human affairs. Moreover, as nothing is stable and uniform where the imperfections of humanity take place, this religious society, besides the vicissitudes to which it must be exposed from the influence of external events, must be liable to various changes in its internal constitution. In this view of things, then it appears, that the history of the church, like that of the state, may be divided, with propriety, into two general Division of Ecclesiastical History into External and Internal.

branches, which we may call its *External* and *Internal* history.

The external, which comprehends the prosperous and calamitous events that happened to the church.

III. The *External History* of the church comprehends all the changes, vicissitudes, and events, that have diversified the external state and condition of this sacred community. And as all public societies have their periods of lustre and decay, and are exposed to revolutions both of a happy and calamitous nature, so this first branch of Ecclesiastical History may be subdivided into two, comprehending, respectively, the *prosperous* and *calamitous* events that have happened to the church.

Prosperous events.

IV. The *prosperous* events that have contributed to extend the limits, or to augment the influence of the Christian church, have proceeded either from its rulers and leaders, or from the subordinate members of this great community. Under the former class, we rank its *public* rulers, such as princes, magistrates, and pontiffs, who, by their authority and laws, their liberality, and even their arms, have maintained its cause and extended its borders; as also, its more *private* leaders, its learned and pious doctors, whose wise counsels, pious exploits, eminent examples, and distinguished abilities, have contributed most to promote its *true* prosperity and lustre. Under the latter class, we may comprehend the advantages which the cause of Christianity has derived from the active faith, the invincible constancy, the fervent piety, and extensive charity, of its genuine professors, who, by the attractive lustre of these amiable virtues, have led many into the way of truth, and engaged them to submit themselves to the empire of the MESSIAH.

Calamitous events.

V. Under the *calamitous* events that have happened to the church, may be comprehended the injuries it has received from the vices and passions of its friends, and the bitter opposition and insidious

dious stratagems of its enemies. The professors of Christianity, and more especially the doctors and rulers of the church, have done unspeakable detriment to the cause of religion, by their ignorance and sloth, their luxury and ambition, their uncharitable zeal, animosities and contentions, of which many shocking examples will be exhibited in the course of this history. Christianity had *public* enemies to encounter, even princes and magistrates, who opposed its progress by penal laws, and blood-thirsty persecution; it had also private and inveterate adversaries in a certain set of philosophers, or rather sophists, who, enslaved to superstition, or abandoned to atheism, endeavoured to blast the rising church by their perfidious accusations, and their virulent writings.

Internal History, which comprehends.

VI. Such then are the events that are exhibited to our view in the external history of the church. Its *Internal History* comprehends the changes and vicissitudes that have happened in its inward constitution, in that system of discipline and doctrine by which it stands distinguished from all other religious societies. This branch may be properly termed the *History of the Christian Religion*. The causes of these internal changes are to be sought for principally in the conduct and measures of those who have presided and borne rule in the church. It has been too frequently their practice to interpret the truths and precepts of religion in a manner accommodated to their particular systems, nay, to their private interest; and, while they have found in some implicit obedience, they have met with warm opposition from others. Hence have proceeded theological broils and civil commotions, in which the cause of religion has often been defended at the expence both of justice and humanity. All these things must be observed with the strictest attention by an ecclesiastical historian.

First, the history of the Christian doctors.

VII. The first thing, therefore, that should be naturally treated in the *Internal History* of the church, is the history of its ministers, rulers, and form of government. When we look back to the commencement of the Christian church, we find its government administered jointly by the pastors and the people. But, in process of time, the scene changes, and we see these pastors affecting an air of pre-eminence and superiority, trampling upon the rights and privileges of the community, and assuming to themselves a supreme authority, both in civil and religious matters. This invasion of the rights of the people was at length carried to such a height, that a single man administered, or at least pretended a right to administer, the affairs of the whole church with an unlimited sway.—Among the doctors of these early times, there were some who acquired, by their learned labours, a shining reputation, and an universal influence; they were regarded as oracles; their decisions were handed down to posterity, as sacred rules of faith and practice; and they thus deserve to be mentioned, with particular distinction, among the governors of the church, though no part of its public administration was actually in their hands [*a*].

Secondly, the history of the doctrines and laws of the church.

VIII. After giving an account of the rulers and doctors of the church, the ecclesiastical historian proceeds to exhibit a view of the *laws* that are peculiar to this sacred community, that form, as it were, its centre of union, and distinguish it from all other religious societies. These *laws* are of two kinds. The first are properly called *divine*, because they are immediately enacted by God himself, and are contained

☞ [*a*] By these our author means the *Fathers*, whose writings form still a rule of faith in the Romish Church, while in the Protestant churches, their authority diminishes from day to day.

tained in those sacred books, which carry the most striking marks of a divine origin. They consist of those *doctrines* that are the objects of faith and reason, and those *precepts* that are addressed to the heart and the affections. To the second kind belong those *laws* that are merely of human institution, and derive their authority only from the injunctions of the rulers of the church.

Rules necessary to be observed in giving a history of the doctrines of the Christian church.

IX. In that part of the sacred history which relates to the doctrines of Christianity, it is necessary, above all things, to inquire particularly into the degree of authority that has been attributed to the sacred writings in all the different periods of the church, and also into the manner in which the divine doctrines they contain, have been explained and illustrated. For the true state of religion in every age can only be learned from the point of view in which these celestial oracles were considered, and from the manner in which they were expounded to the people. As long as they were the only rule of faith, religion preserved its native purity; and, in proportion as their decisions were either neglected or postponed to the inventions of men, it degenerated from its primitive and divine simplicity. It is farther necessary to shew under this head, what was the fate of the pure laws and doctrines of Christianity—how they were interpreted and explained—how they were defended against the enemies of the Gospel—how they were corrupted and adulterated by the ignorance and licentiousness of men. And, finally it would be proper to inquire here, how far the lives and manners of Christians have been conformable to the dictates of these sacred laws, and the influence that these sublime doctrines ought to have upon the hearts of men; as also to examine the rules of discipline prescribed by the spiritual governors of the church, in order to

correct and restrain the vices and irregularities of its members.

Thirdly, the history of its ceremonies and worship.

X. The *Human Laws*, that constitute a part of ecclesiastical government, consist in precepts concerning the External worship of the Deity, and, in certain rites, either confirmed by custom, or introduced by positive and express authority. *Rites* and *ceremonies* regard religion either *directly* or *indirectly*; by the former, we understand those that are used in the immediate worship of the Supreme Being, whether in public or in private; by the latter, such pious and decent institutions as, besides direct acts of worship, have obtained in the church. This part of sacred history is of a vast extent, both on account of the great diversity of these ceremonies, and the frequent changes and modifications through which they have passed. This consideration will justify our treating them with brevity, in a work which is only designed as a compendious view of ecclesiastical history.

Fourthly, the history of the heresies that have divided it.

XI. As bodies politic are sometimes distracted with wars and seditions, so has the Christian church, though designed to be the mansion of charity and concord, been unhappily perplexed by intestine divisions, occasioned sometimes by points of doctrine, at others by a variety of sentiments about certain rites and ceremonies. The principal authors of these divisions, have been stigmatized with the title of *Heretics*, and their peculiar opinions of consequence distinguished by the appellation of *Heresies* [*b*]. The nature therefore and progress of these intestine divisions or *heresies* are to be carefully unfolded; and, if this be done with judgment and impartiality, it must prove useful and interesting in the highest degree, though

☞ [*b*] A term innocent in its primitive signification, though become odious by the enormity of some errors, to which it has been applied, and also by the use that has been made of it, to vent the malignity of enthusiasts and bigots.

though at the same time it must be observed, that no branch of ecclesiastical history is so painful and difficult, on account of the sagacity, candour, and application that it requires in order to its being treated in a satisfactory manner. The difficulty of arriving at the truth, in researches of this nature, is extreme, on account of the injurious treatment that has been shewn to the heads of religious sects, and the unfair representations that have been made of their tenets and opinions; and this difficulty has been considerably augmented by this particular circumstance, that the greatest part of the writings of those who were branded with the name of heretics have not reached our times. It is therefore the duty of a candid historian to avoid attaching to this term the invidious sense in which it is too often used, since it is the invective of all contending parties, and is employed against truth as frequently as against error. The wisest method here is to take the word *Heretic* in its general signification, as denoting a person, who, either directly or indirectly, has been the occasion of exciting divisions and dissensions among Christians.

In treating Ecclesiastical History, events are to be considered in connexion with their causes.

XII. After thus considering what constitutes the *matter* of Ecclesiastical History, it will be proper to bestow a few thoughts on the *manner* of treating it, as this is a point of too much importance not to deserve a moment's attention. And here we may observe, that, in order to render both the External and Internal History of the Church truly interesting and useful, it is absolutely necessary to trace effects to their causes, and to connect events with the circumstances, views, principles, and instruments that have contributed to their existence. A bare recital of facts can at best but enrich the *memory*, and furnish a certain degree of amusement; but the historian who enters into the secret springs that

direct the course of outward events, and views, things in their various relations, connexions, and tendencies, gives thus a proper exercise to the *judgment* of the reader, and administers, on many occasions, the most useful lessons of wisdom and prudence. It is true, a high degree of caution is to be observed here, lest, in disclosing the secret springs of public events, we substitute imaginary causes in the place of real, and attribute the actions of men to principles they never professed.

General method of investigating the secret causes of things.

XIII. In order to discover the secret causes of public events, some general succours are to be derived from the *History of the times* in which they happened, and the *Testimonies of the authors* by whom they are recorded. But besides these, a considerable *acquaintance with human nature*, founded on long observation and experience, is singularly useful in researches of this kind. The historian, who has acquired a competent knowledge of the views that occupy the generality of men, who has studied a great variety of characters, and attentively observed the force and violence of human passions, together with the infirmities and contradictions they produce in the conduct of life, will find, in this knowledge, a key to the secret reasons and motives which gave rise to many of the most important events of ancient times. A knowledge also of the *manners* and *opinions* of the persons concerned in the events that are related, will contribute much to lead us to the true origin of things.

More particular rules for coming to this knowledge in the External history of the church;

XIV. There are, however, besides these general views, particular considerations, which will assist us still further in tracing up to their true causes the various events of sacred history. We must, for example, in the External history of the church, attend carefully to two things; *first*, to the political state of those kingdoms and nations in which the Christian religion has been embraced

braced or rejected; and, *secondly*, to their religious state, *i. e.* the opinions they have entertained concerning the divine nature, and the worship that is to be addressed to him. For we shall then perceive, with more certainty and less difficulty, the reasons of the different reception Christianity has met with in different nations, when we are acquainted with the respective forms of civil government, the political maxims, and the public forms of religion that prevailed in those countries and in those periods of time in which the Gospel received encouragement, or met with opposition.

and in its Internal History.

XV. With respect to the *Internal History of the Church*, nothing is more adapted to lay open to view the hidden springs of its various changes, than an acquaintance with the *History of learning and philosophy* in the times of old. For it is certain, that human learning and philosophy have, in all times, pretended to modify the doctrines of Christianity; and that these pretensions have extended further than belongs to the province of philosophy on the one hand, or is consistent with the purity and simplicity of the Gospel on the other. It may also be observed, that a knowledge of the forms of civil government, and of the superstitious rites and institutions of ancient times, is not only useful, as we remarked above, to illustrate several things in the *External* History of the church, but also to render a satisfactory account of its *Internal* variations, both in point of doctrine and worship. For the genius of human laws, and the maxims of civil rulers, have undoubtedly had a great influence in forming the constitution of the church; and even its spiritual leaders have, in too many instances, from an ill-judged prudence, modelled its discipline and worship after the ancient superstitions.

XVI.

The sources from whence ecclesiastical history must be derived.

XVI. We cannot be at any loss to know the sources from whence this important knowledge is to be derived. The best writers of every age, who make mention of ecclesiastical affairs, and particularly those who were contemporary with the events they relate, are to be carefully consulted; since it is from credible testimonies and respectable authorities that history derives a solid and permanent foundation. Our esteem for those writers, who may be considered as the sources of historical knowledge, ought not however to lead us to treat with neglect the historians and annalists, who have already made use of these original records: since it betrays a foolish sort of vanity to reject the advantages that may be derived from the succours and labours of those who have preceded us in their endeavours to cast light upon matters that have been for many ages covered with obscurity [c].

The essential qualities of an ecclesiastical History.

XVII. From all this we shall easily discern the qualifications that are essential to a good writer of ecclesiastical History. His knowledge of human affairs must be considerable, and his learning extensive. He must be endowed with a spirit of observation and sagacity; a habit of reasoning with evidence and facility; a faithful memory; and a judgment matured by experience, and strengthened by exercise. Such are the intellectual endowments that are required in the character of a good historian; and the moral qualities that are necessary to complete it, are, a persevering and inflexible attachment to truth and virtue, a freedom from the servitude of prejudice and passion, and a laborious and pátient turn of mind. XVIII.

[c] The various writers of ecclesiastical history are enumerated by SEVER. WALT. SLUTERUS, in his *Propylæum Historiæ Christianæ*, published at *Lunenburg* in 4to. in the year 1696; and by CASP. SAGITTARIUS, in his *Introductio ad Historiam Ecclesiasticam, singulasque ejus partes.*

XVIII. Those who undertake to write the history of the Christian church are exposed to receive a bias from three different sources; from *times*, *persons*, and *opinions*. The *times*, in which we live, have often so great an influence on our manner of judging, as to make us consider the events, which happen in our days, as a rule by which we are to estimate the probability or evidence of those that are recorded in the history of past ages. The *persons*, on whose testimonies we think we have reason to depend, acquire an imperceptible authority over our sentiments, that too frequently seduces us to adopt their errors, especially if these persons have been distinguished by eminent degrees of sanctity and virtue. And an attachment to favourite *opinions*, leads authors sometimes to pervert, or, at least, to modify facts in favour of those who have embraced these opinions, or to the disadvantage of such as have opposed them. These kinds of seduction are so much the more dangerous, as those whom they deceive are, in innumerable cases, insensible of their delusion, and of the false representations of things to which it leads them. It is not necessary to observe the solemn obligations that bind an historian to guard against these three sources of error with the most delicate circumspection, and the most scrupulous attention.

An historian must be free from a servile attachment to times, men, and opinions.

XIX. It is well known nevertheless how far ecclesiastical historians, in all ages, have departed from these rules, and from others of equal evidence and importance. For not to mention those who lay claim to a high rank among the writers of history in consequence of a happy memory, loaded with an ample heap of materials, nor those whose pens are rather guided by sordid views of interest than by a generous love of truth, it is but too evident, how few in number the unprejudiced and impartial historians are, whom neither the influence

The defects that are visible in the writers of church history.

fluence of the sect to which they belong, nor the venerable and imposing names of antiquity, nor the spirit of the times and the torrent of prevailing *opinion*, can turn aside from the obstinate pursuit of truth *alone*. In the present age, more especially, the spirit of the times and the influence of predominant opinions, have gained with many an incredible ascendant. Hence we find frequently in the writings, even of learned men, such wretched arguments as these: *Such an opinion is true; therefore it must of necessity have been adopted by the primitive Christians—Christ has commanded us to live in such a manner; therefore it is undoubtedly certain, that the Christians of ancient times lived so.—A certain custom does not take place now; therefore it did not prevail in former times.*

The advantages that result from the study of Ecclesiastical History. General,

XX. If those who apply themselves to the composition of Ecclesiastical History be careful to avoid the sources of error mentioned above, their labours will be eminently useful to mankind, and more especially to those who are called to the important office of instructing others, in the sacred truths and duties of Christianity. The history of the church presents to our view a variety of objects that are every way adapted to confirm our faith. When we contemplate here the discouraging obstacles, united efforts of kingdoms and empires, and the dreadful calamities which Christianity, in its very infancy, was obliged to encounter, and over which it gained an immortal victory, this will be sufficient to fortify its true and zealous professors against all the threats, cavils, and stratagems of profane and impious men. The great and shining examples also, which display their lustre, more or less, in every period of the Christian history, must have an admirable tendency to inflame our piety, and to excite, even in the coldest and most insensible hearts, the love

of

of God and virtue. Those amazing revolutions and events that distinguished every age of the church, and often seemed to arise from small beginnings, and causes of little consequence, proclaim, with a solemn and respectable voice, the empire of providence, and also the inconstancy and vanity of human things. And, among the many advantages that arise from the study of Ecclesiastical History, it is none of the least, that we shall see therein the origin and occasions of those ridiculous rites, absurd opinions, foolish superstitions, and pernicious errors, with which Christianity is yet disfigured in too many parts of the world. This knowledge will naturally lead us to a view of the truth in its beautiful simplicity, will engage us to love it, and render us zealous in its defence; not to mention the pleasure and satisfaction that we must feel in researches and discoveries of such an interesting kind.

and particular.

XXI. They, more especially, who are appointed to instruct the youth in the public universities, as also such as are set apart for the service of the church, will derive from this study the most useful lessons of wisdom and prudence, to direct them in the discharge of their respective offices. On the one hand, the inconsiderate zeal and temerity of others, and the pernicious consequences with which they have been attended, will teach circumspection; and in the mistakes into which even men of eminent merit and abilities have fallen, they will often see the things they are obliged to avoid, and the sacrifices it will be prudent to make, in order to maintain peace and concord in the church; on the other, illustrious examples and salutary measures will hold forth to them a rule of conduct, a lamp to shew them the paths they must pursue. It may be further observed, that if we except the arms which scripture and reason furnish against superstition and error,

error, there is nothing that will enable us to combat them with more efficacy than the view of their deplorable effects, as they are represented to us in the history of the church. It would be endless to enumerate all the advantages that result from the study of Ecclesiastical History; experience alone can display these in all their extent; nor shall we mention the benefits that may be derived from it by those who have turned their views to other sciences than that of theology, and its more peculiar utility to such as are engaged in the study of the civil law. All this would lead us too far from our present design.

The method of treating Ecclesiastical History in its external and internal branches.

XXII. As the history of the church is *External* or *Internal*, so the manner of treating it must be suited to that division. As to the first, when the narration is long, and the thread of the history runs through a great number of ages, it is proper to divide it into certain periods, which will give the reader time to breathe, assist memory, and also introduce a certain method and order into the work. In the following history the usual division into centuries is adopted preferably to all others, because most generally liked; though it be attended with difficulties and inconveniences.

XXIII. A considerable part of these inconveniences will be however removed, if, besides this smaller division into centuries, we adopt a larger one, and divide the space of time that elapsed between the birth of CHRIST and our days into certain grand periods, that are distinguished by signal revolutions or remarkable events. It is on this account that we have judged it expedient to comprehend the following History in FOUR BOOKS, that will take in four remarkable periods: the FIRST will be employed in exhibiting the state and vicissitudes of the Christian church, from its commencement to the time of CONSTANTINE the Great. The SECOND will comprehend the

the period, that extends from the reign of CONSTANTINE to that of CHARLEMAGNE, which produced such a remarkable change in the face of *Europe*. The THIRD will contain the History of the Church, from the time of CHARLEMAGNE to the memorable period when LUTHER arose in *Germany*, to oppose the tyranny of *Rome*, and to deliver divine truth from the darkness that covered it. And the FOURTH will carry down the same history, from the rise of LUTHER to the present times.

XXIV. We have seen above, that the sphere of Ecclesiastical History is extensive, that it comprehends a great variety of objects, and embraces political as well as religious matters, so far as the former are related to the latter, either as causes or effects. But, however great the diversity of these objects may be, they are closely connected; and it is the particular business of an ecclesiastical historian, to observe a method that will shew this connection in the most conspicuous point of view, and form into one regular *whole* a variety of parts that seem heterogeneous and discordant. Different writers have followed here different methods, according to the diversity of their views and their peculiar manner of thinking. The order I have observed will be seen above in that part of this *Introduction*, which treats of the subject-matter of Ecclesiastical History; the mention of it is therefore omitted here, to avoid unnecessary repetitions.

AN

AN

ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY.

Book the First.

CONTAINING

THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH.

FROM

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST,

TO

CONSTANTINE THE GREAT.

AN

ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY.

BOOK I.

CONTAINING THE HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH FROM ITS FIRST RISE TO THE TIME OF CONSTANTINE THE GREAT.

PART I.

Comprehending the EXTERNAL HISTORY of the CHURCH.

CHAPTER I.

Concerning the Civil and Religious State of the World at the Birth of CHRIST.

The state of the Roman empire.

1. A GREAT part of the world was become subject to the Roman empire, when JESUS CHRIST made his appearance upon earth. The remoter nations, which had submitted to the yoke of this mighty empire, were ruled, either by Roman governors, invested with temporary commissions, or by their own princes and laws, in subordination to the republic, whose sovereignty was to be acknowledged, and from which the conquered kings that were continued in their dominions, derived their borrowed majesty. At the same time the Roman people and their venerable senate, though they had not lost all shadow of liberty, were yet, in reality, reduced to a state

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of servile submission to Augustus Cæsar, who, by artifice, perfidy, and bloodshed, had proceeded to an enormous degree of power, and united in his own person the pompous titles of Emperor, Sovereign, Pontiff, Censor, Tribune of the people, Proconsul; in a word, all the great offices of the state [*a*].

The inconveniences, which proceededfrom the corrupt administration of its magistrates.

II. The Roman government, considered both with respect to its form and its laws, was certainly mild and equitable [*b*]. But the injustice and avarice of the Prætors and Proconsuls, and the ambitious lust of consequence and dominion, which was the predominant passion of the Roman people, together with the rapacious proceedings of the publicans, by whom the taxes of the empire were levied, were the occasions of perpetual tumults and unsupportable grievances. And among the many evils that arose from thence, we justly reckon the formidable armies, that were necessary to support these extortions in the provinces, and the civil wars which frequently broke out between the oppressed nations and their haughty conquerors.

The advantages which arose from its extent.

III. It must, at the same time, be acknowledged, that this supreme dominion of one people, or rather of one man over so many kingdoms, was attended with many considerable advantages to mankind in general, and to the propagation and advancement of Christianity in particular. For, by the means of this almost universal empire, many nations, different in their language,

[*a*] See for this purpose the learned work of Augustine Campianus, entitled, *De officio et potestate Magistratuum Romanorum et jurisdictione*, lib. i. cap. i. p. 3, 4, &c. *Genevæ*, 1725, in quarto.

[*b*] See Moyle's *Essay on the Constitution of the Roman Government*, in the posthumous works of that author, vol. i. p. 1——48. as also Scip. Maffaei *Verona illustrata*, lib. ii. p. 65.

language, and in their manners, were united more intimately together in social intercourse. Hence a passage was opened to the remotest countries, by the communications which the Romans formed between the conquered provinces [*c*]. Hence also the nations, whose manners were savage and barbarous, were civilized by the laws and commerce of the Romans. And by this, in short, the benign influence of letters and philosophy was spread abroad in countries which had lain before under the darkest ignorance. All this contributed, no doubt, in a singular manner, to facilitate the progress of the gospel, and to crown the labours of its first ministers and heralds with success [*d*].

The Roman empire enjoys peace.

IV. The Roman empire, at the birth of Christ, was less agitated by wars and tumults, than it had been for many years before. For though I cannot assent to the opinion of those, who, following the account of Orosius, maintain, that the temple of Janus was then shut, and that wars and discords absolutely ceased throughout the world [*e*]; yet it is certain, that the period, in which our Saviour descended upon earth, may be justly styled the *Pacific Age*, if we compare it with the preceding times. And indeed the tranquillity that then reigned, was necessary to enable the ministers of Christ to execute, with success, their sublime commission to the human race.

 V. The

[*c*] See, for a further illustration of this matter, *Histoire des grands chemins de l' Empire Romain*, par Nicol. Bergier, printed in the year 1728. See also the very learned Everard Otto, *De tutela viarum publicarum*, Part II. p. 314.

[*d*] Origen, among others, makes particular mention of this, in the second book of his answer to Celsus, p. 79. of the *Cambridge* edition.

[*e*] See Jo. Massoni *Templum Jani, Christo nascente, reseratum.* Roterodami, 1706.

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The state of the other nations.

V. The want of ancient records renders it impossible to say any thing satisfactory or certain concerning the state of those nations, who did not receive the Roman yoke: nor indeed is their history essential to our present purpose. It is sufficient to observe, with respect to them, that those who inhabited the eastern regions were strangers to the sweets of liberty, and groaned under the burden of an oppressive yoke. This, their softness and effeminacy, both in point of manners and bodily constitution, contributed to make them support with an unmanly patience; and even the religion they professed rivetted their chains. On the contrary, the northern nations enjoyed, in their frozen dwellings, the blessings of sacred freedom, which their government, their religion, a robust and vigorous frame of body and spirit, derived from the inclemency and severity of their climate, all united to preserve and maintain [*f*].

All sunk in superstition;

VI. All these nations lived in the practice of the most abominable superstitions. For though the notion of one supreme Being was not entirely effaced in the human mind, but shewed itself frequently, even through the darkness of the grossest idolatry; yet all nations, except that of the Jews, acknowledged a number of governing powers, whom they called gods; and one or more of which they supposed to preside over each particular province or people. They worshipped these fictitious deities with various rites; they considered them as widely different from each other in sex, and power; in their nature, and also in their

[*f*] *Fere itaque imperia* (says Seneca) *penes eos fuere populos, qui mitiore cælo utuntur:* in frigora *septemtrionemque vergentibus immansueta ingenia sunt, ut ait poeta,* suoque simillima cœlo. Seneca *De ira,* lib. ii. cap. xvi. tom. i. *Opp. Edit. Gronovii.*

their respective offices, and they appeased them by a multiplicity of ceremonies and offerings, in order to obtain their protection and favour. So that, however different the degrees of enormity might be, with which this absurd and impious theology appeared in different countries; yet there was no nation, whose sacred rites and whose religious worship did not discover a manifest abuse of reason, and very striking marks of extravagance and folly.

VII. Every nation then had its respective gods, over which presided one more excellent than the rest; yet in such a manner that this supreme deity was himself controlled by the rigid empire of the fates, or what the philosophers called *Eternal necessity.* The gods of the East were different from those of the Gauls, the Germans, and the other northern nations. The Grecian divinities differed widely from those of the Egyptians, who deified plants, animals, and a great variety of the productions both of nature and art [*g*]. Each people also had their own particular manner of worshipping and appeasing their respective deities, entirely different from the sacred rites of other countries. In process of time, however, the Greeks and Romans grew as ambitious in their religious pretensions, as in their political claims. They maintained, that *their* gods, though under different names, were the objects of religious worship in all nations, and therefore they gave the names of their deities to those of other countries [*h*]. This pretension, whether supported

but not of the same kind.

[*g*] See the discourses of Athanasius, entitled, *Oratio contra Gentes,* in the first volume of his works.

☞ [*h*] This fact renders a satisfactory account of the vast number of gods who bore the name of Jupiter, and the multitudes that passed under those of Mercury, Venus, Hercules, Juno, *&c.* The Greeks, when they found, in other countries, deities, that resembled their own, persuaded the worshippers

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by ignorance or other means, introduced inexpressible darkness and perplexity into the history of the ancient superstitions, and has been also the occasion of innumerable errors in the writings of the learned.

No wars nor dissensions occasioned by this variety of religions.

VIII. One thing indeed, which, at first sight, appears very remarkable, is, that this variety of religions and of gods neither produced wars nor dissensions among the different nations, the Egyptians excepted [*i*]. Nor is it, perhaps, necessary to except even them, since their wars undertaken for their gods cannot be looked upon with propriety, as wholly of a religious nature [*k*]. Each nation

shippers of these foreign gods, that their deities were the same that were honoured in Greece, and were, indeed, convinced themselves that this was the case. In consequence of this, the Greeks gave the names of their gods to those of other nations, and the Romans in this followed their example. Hence we find the names of Jupiter, Mars, Mercury, Venus, &c. frequently mentioned in the more recent monuments and inscriptions which have been found among the Gauls and Germans, though the ancient inhabitants of those countries worshipped no gods under such denominations. I cannot think that this method of the Greeks and Romans has introduced so much confusion into mythology as Dr. Mosheim here imagines. If indeed there was no resemblance between the Greek and Roman deities, and those of other nations, and if the names of the deities of the former had been given to those of the latter in an arbitrary and undistinguishable manner, the reflection of our historian would be undeniably true. But it has been alleged by many learned men, and that with a high degree of probability, that the principal deities of all nations resembled each other extremely in their essential characters; and, if so, their receiving the same names could not introduce much confusion into mythology, since they were probably derived from one common source. If the Thor of the ancient Celts was the same in dignity, character, and attributes, with the Jupiter of the Greeks and Romans, where was the impropriety of giving the same name?

[*i*] There are ingenious things to be found upon this head in the *Expositio Mensæ Isiacæ* of Pignorius, p. 41.

☞ [*k*] The religious wars of the Egyptians were not undertaken to compel others to adopt their worship, but to avenge the slaughter that was made of their gods, *viz.* Crocodiles,

nation suffered its neighbours to follow their own method of worship, to adore their own gods, to enjoy their own rites and ceremonies, and discovered no sort of displeasure at their diversity of sentiments in religious matters. There is, however, little wonderful in this spirit of mutual toleration, when we consider that they all looked upon the world as one great empire, divided into various provinces, over every one of which a certain order of divinities presided; and that, therefore, none could behold with contempt the gods of other nations, or force strangers to pay homage to theirs. The Romans exercised this toleration in the amplest manner. For, though they would not allow any changes to be made in the religions that were publicly professed in the empire, nor any new form of worship to be openly introduced; yet they granted to their citizens a full liberty of observing, in private, the sacred rites of other nations, and of honouring foreign deities (whose worship contained nothing inconsistent with the interests and laws of the republic) with feasts, temples, consecrated groves, and such like testimonies of homage and respect [*l*].

Most of their gods were departed heroes.

IX. The deities of almost all nations were either ancient heroes, renowned for noble exploits and worthy deeds, or kings and generals who had founded empires, or women become illustrious by remarkable actions or useful inventions. The merit of these distinguished and eminent persons, contemplated by their posterity with an enthusiastic

codiles, &c. by the neighbouring nations. They were not offended at their neighbours for serving other divinities, but could not bear that they should put theirs to death.

[*l*] See concerning this interesting subject, a very curious and learned treatise of the famous Bynckershoeck, entitled, *Dissertatio de cultu peregrinæ religionis apud Romanos.* This dissertation is to be found in the *Opuscula* of that excellent author, which were published at *Leyden* in quarto, in the year 1719.

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siastic gratitude, was the reason of their being exalted to celestial honours. The natural world furnished another kind of deities, that were added to these by some nations. And as the sun, moon, and stars shine forth with a lustre superior to that of all other material beings; so it is certain, that they particularly attracted the attention of mankind, and received religious homage from almost all the nations of the world [*m*]. From these beings of a nobler kind, idolatry descended into an enormous multiplication of inferior powers; so that in many countries, mountains, trees, and rivers, the earth, the sea, and the winds, nay, even virtues, vices, and diseases had their shrines attended by devout and zealous worshippers [*n*.]

The worship paid to these deities.

X. These deities were honoured with rites and sacrifices of various kinds, according to their respective nature and offices [*o*]. The rites used in their

☞ [*m*] The ingenious editor of the Ruins of Balbec has given us, in the preface to that noble work, a very curious account of the origin of the religious worship that was offered to the heavenly bodies by the Syrians and Arabians. In those uncomfortable deserts, where the *day* presents nothing to the view, but the uniform, tedious, and melancholy prospect of barren sands, the *night* discloses a most delightful and magnificent spectacle, and appears arrayed with charms of the most attractive kind; for the most part unclouded and serene, it exhibits to the wondering eye the *Host of heaven*, in all their amazing variety and glory. In the view of this stupendous scene, the transition from admiration to idolatry was too easy to uninstructed minds; and a people, whose climate offered no beauties to contemplate but those of the firmament, would naturally look thither for the objects of their worship. The form of idolatry, in Greece, was different from that of the Syrians; and Mr. Wood ingeniously attributes this to that smiling and variegated scene of mountains, vallies, rivers, groves, woods, and fountains, which the transported imagination in the midst of its pleasing astonishment, supposed to be the seats of invisible deities. See a further account of this matter in the elegant work above mentioned.

[*n*] See the learned work of J. G. Vossius, *De idololatria.*

[*o*] See J. Saubertus, *De sacrificiis veterum.* Lug. Bat. 1699.

their worship were absurd and ridiculous, and frequently cruel and obscene. Most nations offered animals, and some proceeded to the enormity of human sacrifices. As to their prayers, they were void of piety and sense, both with respect to their matter and their form [*p*]. Pontiffs, priests, and ministers, distributed into several classes, presided in this strange worship, and were appointed to prevent disorder in the performance of the sacred rites. This *order*, which was supposed to be distinguished by an immediate intercourse and friendship with the gods, abused their authority in the basest manner, to deceive an ignorant and wretched people.

Confined to stated times and places.

XI. The religious worship we have now been considering, was confined to stated *times* and *places*. The statues and other representations of the gods were placed in the temples [*q*], and supposed to be animated in an incomprehensible manner. For the votaries of these fictitious deities, however destitute they might be of reason in other respects, avoided carefully the imputation of worshipping inanimate beings, such as brass, wood, and stone, and therefore pretended that the divinity, represented by the statue, was really present in it, if the dedication was duly and properly made [*r*].

Mysteries.

XII. But, beside the public worship of the gods, to which all without exception were admitted, there were certain religious institutions and rites

[*p*] See M. Brouerius *a* Niedeck, *De adorationibus veterum populorum*, printed at *Utrecht*, in 8vo. in the year 1711.

☞ [*q*] Some nations were without temples, such as the Persians, Gauls, Germans, and Bretons, who performed their religious worship in the open air, or in the shadowy retreats of consecrated groves.

[*r*] See Arnobius *adv. Gentes*, lib. vi. p. 254. according to the edition of Heraldus. See also Augustine *De civitate Dei*, lib. vii. cap. xxxiii.; and the *Misopogon of the Emperor* Julian, p. 361. according to the edition of Spanheim.

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rites celebrated in secret by the Greeks and several eastern nations, to which a very small number were allowed access. These were commonly called *mysteries;* and the persons who desired to be initiated therein, were obliged previously to exhibit satisfactory proofs of their fidelity and patience, by passing through various trials and ceremonies of the most disagreeable kind. The secret of these institutions was kept in the strictest manner, as the initiated could not reveal any thing that passed in them without exposing their lives to the most imminent danger [*s*]; and that is the reason why, at this time, we are so little acquainted with the true nature, and the real design of these hidden rites. It is, however, well known, that, in some of those *mysteries*, many things were transacted that were contrary both to real modesty, and outward decency. And, indeed, from the whole of the Pagan rites, the intelligent few might easily learn, that the divinities generally worshipped, were rather men famous for their vices, than distinguished by virtuous and worthy deeds [*t*].

No tendency in Paganism to promote virtue.

XIII. It is, at least, certain, that this religion had not the least influence towards the exciting or nourishing solid and true virtue in the minds of men. For the gods and goddesses, to whom public homage was paid, exhibited to their worshippers rather examples of egregious crimes, than of useful and illustrious virtues [*u*]. The gods,

[*s*] See Clarkson on the *Liturgies*, sect. iv. p. 36. as also Meursius, *De mysteriis Eleusiniis.*

[*t*] See Cicero *Disput. Tusculan.* lib. ii. cap. xiii.

[*u*] There is a very remarkable passage to this purpose in the *Tristia* of Ovid, book the second, beginning at line 287.

" Quis locus est templis augustior? hæc quoque vitet,
" In culpam si quæ est ingeniosa suam.
" Cum steterit Jovis æde: Jovis succurret in æde,
" Quam multas matres fecerit ille Deus.

" Proxima

gods, moreover, were esteemed superior to men in power and immortality; but, in every thing else, they were considered as their equals. The priests were little solicitous to animate the people to a virtuous conduct, either by their precepts or their example; nay, they plainly enough declared, that all that was essential to the true worship of the gods, was contained only in the rites and institutions which the people had received by tradition from their ancestors [*w*]. And as to what regarded the rewards of virtue and the punishment of vice after this present life, the general notions were partly uncertain, partly licentious, and often more proper to administer indulgence to vice, than encouragement to virtue. Hence, the wiser part of mankind, about the time of Christ's birth, looked upon this whole system of religion as a just object of ridicule and contempt.

On the contrary it promoted corruption of manners.

XIV. The consequences of this wretched theology were a universal corruption of manners, which discovered itself in the impunity of the most flagitious crimes [*x*]. Juvenal and Persius among the Latins, and Lucian among the Greeks, bear testimony to the justice of this heavy accusation. It is also well known, that no public law prohibited the sports of the gladiators, the exercise of unnatural lusts, the licentiousness of

" Proxima adoranti Junonia templa subibit,
" Pellicibus multis hanc doluisse Deam.
" Pallade conspecta, natum de crimine virgo.
" Sustulerit quare, quæret Ericthonium."

[*w*] See Barbeyrac's Preface to his French translation of Puffendorf's *System of the Law of Nature and Nations*, sect. vi. p. 21. of the last edition.

[*x*] The corrupt manners of those who lay in the darkness of idolatry are described in an ample and affecting manner, in the first of Cyprian's epistles. See also on this subject, Cornel. Adami *Exercitatio de malis Romanorum ante prædicationem Evangelii moribus.* This is the fifth discourse of a Collection published by that learned writer at *Groningen*, 1712, in quarto.

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of divorce, the custom of exposing infants, and of procuring abortions, nor the frontless atrocity of consecrating publicly stews and brothels to certain divinities [*y*].

The arguments of the priests in defence of Paganism.

XV. Such as were not sunk in an unaccountable and brutish stupidity, perceived the deformity of these religious systems. To these the crafty priests addressed two considerations, to prevent their incredulity, and to dispel their doubts. The first was drawn from the miracles and prodigies which they pretended were daily wrought in the temples, before the statues of the gods and heroes that were placed there; and the second was deduced from oracles and divination, by which they maintained, that the secrets of futurity were unfolded through the interposition of the gods. In both these points the cunning of the priests imposed miserably upon the ignorance of the people; and if the discerning few saw the cheat, they were obliged, from a regard to their own safety, to laugh with caution, since the priests were even ready to accuse, before a raging and superstitious multitude, those who discovered their religious frauds, as rebels against the majesty of the immortal gods.

The religion of the Greeks and Romans.

XVI. At the time of Christ's appearance upon earth, the religion of the Romans, as well as their arms, had extended itself through a great part of the world. This religion must be known to those who are acquainted with the Grecian superstitions [*z*]. In some things, indeed, it differs from them; for the Romans, besides the institutions which Numa and others had invented with political

[*y*] See Dr. John Leland's excellent account of the religious sentiments, moral conduct, and future prospects of the Pagans, in his large work entitled, *The Advantage and Necessity of the Christian Revelation.*

[*z*] See Dionysius Halicarn. *Antiq. Rom.* lib. vii. cap. lxxii. p. 460. tom. i. Edit. Hudson.

tical views, added several Italic and Hetrurian fictions to the Grecian fables, and gave also to the Egyptian deities a place among their own [a].

The Romans introduced their own rites among those of the conquered nations.

XVII. In the provinces subjected to the Roman government, there arose a new kind of religion, formed by a mixture of the ancient rites of the conquered nations with those of the Romans. These nations, who, before their subjection, had their own gods, and their own particular religious institutions, were persuaded, by degrees, to admit into their worship a great number of the sacred rites and customs of their conquerors. The view of the Romans, in this change, was not only to confirm their authority by the powerful aid of religion, but also to abolish the inhuman rites which were performed by many of the barbarous nations who had received their yoke; and this change was effected partly by the prudence of the victors, partly by the levity of the vanquished, and by their ambition to please their new masters.

Systems of religions different from that of the Romans.

XVIII. When, from the sacred rites of the ancient Romans, we pass to a review of the other religions that prevailed in the world, we shall find, that the most remarkable may be properly divided into two classes, of which the one will comprehend the religious systems which owe their existence to *political* views; and the other, those which seem to have been formed for *military* purposes. In the former class may be ranked the religions of most of the eastern nations, especially of the Persians, Egyptians, and Indians, which appear to have been solely calculated for the preservation of the state, the supporting of the royal authority and grandeur, the maintenance of public peace, and the advancement of civil virtues. Under the *military* class may be comprehended the religious system of the northern nations; since all the traditions

[a] See Petit *ad leges Atticas*, ilq. i. tit. 1. p. 71.

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ditions that we find among the Germans, the Bretons, the Celts, and the Goths, concerning their divinities, have a manifest tendency to excite and nourish fortitude and ferocity, an insensibility of danger, and a contempt of life. An attentive inquiry into the religions of these respective nations, will abundantly verify what is here asserted.

The wiser among the heathens could not remedy these evils.

XIX. None of these nations, indeed, ever arrived at such an excess of universal barbarity and ignorance, as not to have some discerning men among them, who were sensible of the extravagance of all these religions. But of these sagacious observers, some were destitute of the weight and authority that were necessary to remedy these over-grown evils: and others wanted the will to exert themselves in such a glorious cause. And the truth is, none of them had wisdom equal to such a solemn and arduous enterprize. This appears manifestly from the laborious, but useless efforts of some of the Greek and Roman philosophers against the vulgar superstitions. These venerable sages delivered, in their writings, many sublime things concerning the nature of God, and the duties incumbent upon men; they disputed with sagacity against the popular religion: but to all this they added such chimerical notions, and such absurd subtilties of their own, as may serve to convince us that it belongs to God alone, and not to man, to reveal the truth without any mixture of impurity or error.

Two kinds of philosophy prevailed at the time of Christ's birth.

XX. About the time of Christ's appearance upon earth, there were two kinds of philosophy which prevailed among the civilized nations. One was the philosophy of the Greeks, adopted also by the Romans; and the other, that of the Orientals, which had a great number of votaries in *Persia*, *Syria*, *Chaldea*, *Egypt*, and even among the Jews. The former was distinguished by the simple title of *philosophy*. The latter was honoured

noured with the more pompous appellation of *science*, or *knowledge*, [*b*], since those who embraced this latter sect pretended to be the restorers of the knowledge of God, which was lost in the world [*c*]. The followers of both these systems, in consequence of vehement disputes and dissensions about several points, subdivided themselves into a variety of sects. It is, however, to be observed, that all the sects of the oriental philosophy deduced their various tenets from one fundamental principle, which they held in common; whereas the Greeks were much divided even about the first principles of science.

As we shall have occasion hereafter to speak of the oriental philosophy, we shall confine ourselves here to the doctrines taught by the Grecian sages, and shall give some account of the various sects into which they were divided.

Some of the Grecian systems subversive of all piety.

XXI. Among the Grecian sects, there were some which declared openly against all religion; and others, who, though they acknowledged a deity, and admitted a religion, yet cast a cloud over the truth, instead of exhibiting it in its genuine beauty and lustre.

Of the former kind were the Epicureans and Academics. The Epicureans maintained, "That "the world arose from chance; that the gods "(whose existence they did not dare to deny) "neither did, nor could extend their providen- "tial care to human affairs; that the soul was "mortal; that *pleasure* [*d*] was to be regarded as

☞ [*b*] Γνῶσις (*gnosis*) in the Greek signifies *science*, or *knowledge*, and from hence came the title of Gnostics, which this presumptuous sect claimed as due to their superior light and penetration in divine *things*.

[*c*] St. Paul mentions and condemns both these kinds of philosophy; the Greek, in the *Epistle to the Colossians*, ii. 8. and the Oriental, or Gnosis, in the *First Epistle to Timothy*, vi. 20.

☞ [*d*] The ambiguity of the word *pleasure*, has produced many

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" the ultimate end of man; and that *virtue* was " neither worthy of esteem nor choice, but with " a view to its attainment." The Academics asserted the impossibility of arriving at truth, and held it uncertain, " whether the gods existed or " not; whether the soul was mortal or immortal; " whether virtue were preferable to vice, or vice " to virtue." These two sects, though they struck at the foundation of all religion, were the most numerous of all others at the birth of Christ, and were particularly encouraged by the liberality of the rich, and the protection of those in power [*e*].

Others corrupted the truth. The Aristotelians.

XXII. We observed in the preceding section, that there was another kind of philosophy, in which religion was admitted, but which was, at the same time, deficient by the obscurity it cast upon truth. Under the philosophers of this class, may be reckoned the Platonists, the Stoics, and the followers of Aristotle, whose subtile disputations concerning God, religion, and the social duties, were of little solid use to mankind. The nature of God, as it is explained by Aristotle, is something like the principle that gives motion to

many disputes in the explication of the Epicurean system. If by *pleasure* be understood only sensual gratifications, the tenet here advanced is indisputably monstrous. But if it be taken in a larger sense, and extended to intellectual and moral objects; in what does the scheme of Epicurus, with respect to virtue, differ from the opinions of those Christian philosophers, who maintain that self-love is the *only* spring of all human affections and actions?

[*e*] That of the Epicureans was, however, the most numerous of the two, as appears from the testimony of Cicero, *De finibus*, &c. lib. i. cap. vii. lib. ii. cap. xiv. *Disput. Tusculan.* lib. v. cap. x. Hence the complaint which Juvenal makes in his xiiith Satire, of the Atheism that prevailed at *Rome*, in those excellent words:

" Sunt in fortunæ qui casibus omnia ponunt,
" Et nullo credunt mundum rectore moveri,
" Natura volvente vices et lucis et anni;
" Atque ideo intrepidi quæcunque altaria tangunt."

to a machine; it is a nature happy in the contemplation of itself, and entirely regardless of human affairs; and such a divinity, who differs but little from the god of Epicurus, cannot reasonably be the object either of love or fear. With respect to the doctrine of this philosopher concerning the human soul, it is uncertain, to say no more, whether he believed its immortality or not [*f*]. What then could be expected from such a philosophy? could any thing solid and satisfactory, in favour of piety and virtue, be hoped for from a system which excluded from the universe a divine Providence, and insinuated the mortality of the human soul?

XXIII. The god of the Stoics has somewhat more majesty, than the divinity of Aristotle; nor is he represented by those philosophers as sitting above the starry heavens in a supine indolence, and a perfect inattention to the affairs of the universe. Yet he is described as a corporeal being, united to matter by a necessary connection, and subject to the determinations of an immutable *fate*, so that neither rewards nor punishments can properly proceed from him [*g*]. The learned The Stoics.

 also

☞ [*f*] See the Notes upon Cudworth's *Intellectual System of the Universe*, which Dr. Mosheim subjoined to his Latin translation of that learned work, vol. i. p. 66. 500. vol. ii. p. 1171. See also upon the same subject, Mourgue's *Plan Theologique du Pythagorisme*, tom. i. p. 79.

☞ [*g*] Thus is the Stoical doctrine of *fate* generally represented; but not more generally than unjustly. Their *fatum*, when carefully and attentively examined, seems to have signified no more in the intention of the wisest of that sect, than the plan of government formed originally in the divine mind, a plan all-wise and perfect; and from which, of consequence, the Supreme Being, morally speaking, can never depart. So that when Jupiter is said by the Stoics to be subject to immutable *fate*, this means no more than that he is subject to the wisdom of his own counsels, and acts ever in conformity with his supreme perfections. The following remarkable passage of Seneca, drawn from the 5th chapter of his book *De Providentia*,

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also know that, in the philosophy of this sect, the existence of the soul was confined to a certain period of time. Now it is manifest that these tenets remove, at once the strongest motives to virtue, and the most powerful restraints upon vice; and, therefore the Stoical system may be considered as a body of specious and pompous doctrine, but, at the same time, as a body without nerves, or any principles of consistence and vigour.

The Platonics.

XXIV. Plato is generally looked upon as superior to all the other philosophers in wisdom; and this eminent rank does not seem to have been undeservedly conferred upon him. He taught that the universe was governed by a Being, glorious in power and wisdom, and possessed of a perfect liberty and independence. He extended also the views of mortals beyond the grave, and shewed them, in futurity, prospects adapted to excite their hopes, and to work upon their fears. His doctrine, however, besides the weakness of the foundations on which it rests, and the obscurity with which it is often expressed, has likewise many other considerable defects. It represents the Supreme Creator of the world as destitute of many perfections [*h*], and confined to a certain determinate portion of space. Its decisions, with respect

dentia, is sufficient to confirm the explication we have here given of the *Stoical fate*. "Ille ipse omnium conditor et rec-
"tor scripsit quidem fata, sed sequitur. Semper paret, se-
"mel jussit."

☞ [*h*] This accusation seems to be carried too far by Dr. Mosheim. It is not strictly true, that the doctrine of Plato represents the Supreme Being, as destitute of *many* perfections. On the contrary, *all* the divine perfections are frequently acknowledged by that philosopher. What probably gave occasion to this animadversion of our learned author, was the erroneous notion of Plato, concerning the *invincible malignity* and corruption of *matter*, which the divine power had not been sufficient to reduce entirely to order. Though this notion is, indeed, injurious to the omnipotence of God, yet it is not sufficient to justify the censure now under consideration.

respect to the soul, and dæmons, are too much adapted to beget and nourish superstition. Nor will the moral philosophy of Plato appear worthy of such a high degree of admiration, if we attentively examine and compare together its various parts, and reduce them to their principles [*i*].

Eclectics.

XXV. As then, in these different sects, there were many things maintained that were highly unreasonable and absurd; and as a contentious spirit of opposition and dispute prevailed among them all; certain men of true discernment, and of moderate characters, were of opinion, that none of these sects were to be adhered to in all matters, but that it was rather wise to choose and extract out of each of them such tenets and doctrines as were good and reasonable, and to abandon and reject the rest. This gave rise to a new form of philosophy in *Egypt*, and principally at *Alexandria*, which was called the *Eclectic*, whose founder, according to some, was Potamon, an Alexandrian, though this opinion is not without its difficulties. It appears manifestly from the testimony of Philo the Jew, who was himself one of this sect, that this philosophy was in a flourishing state at *Alexandria*, when our Saviour was upon the earth. The Eclectics held Plato in the highest esteem, though they made no scruple to join with his doctrines, whatever they thought conformable to reason in the tenets and opinions of the other philosophers [*k*].

The use of the foregoing chapter.

XXVI. The attentive reader will easily conclude, from the short view that we have here given of the miserable state of the world at the

 birth

[*i*] There is an ample account of the defects of the Platonic philosophy in a work entitled, *Defense des Peres accusés de Platonisme*, par Franc. Baltus: But there is more learning than accuracy in that performance.

[*k*] See Godof. Olearius, *De Philosophia Eclectica*, Jac. Brucker and others.

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birth of Christ, and mankind, in this period of darkness and corruption, stood highly in need of some divine teacher to convey to the mind *true and certain principles* of religion and wisdom, and to recal wandering mortals to the sublime paths of piety and virtue. The consideration of this wretched condition of mankind will be also singularly useful to those who are not sufficiently acquainted with the advantages, the comforts, and the support, which the sublime doctrines of Christianity are so proper to administer in every state, relation, and circumstance of life. A set of miserable and unthinking creatures treat with negligence, nay, sometimes with contempt, the religion of Jesus, not considering that they are indebted to it for all the good things which they so ungratefully enjoy.

CHAP. II.

Concerning the civil and religious State of the Jewish Nation at the birth of Christ.

The Jews governed by Herod the Great.

I. THE state of the Jews was not much better than that of the other nations at the time of Christ's appearance in the world. They were governed by Herod, who was himself a tributary to the Roman people. This prince was surnamed the Great, (surely from no other circumstance than the greatness of his vices,) and his government was a yoke of the most vexatious and oppressive kind. By a cruel, suspicious, and overbearing temper, he drew upon himself the aversion of all, not excepting those who lived upon his bounty. By a mad luxury and an affectation of magnificence far above his fortune, together with the most profuse and immoderate largesses, he exhausted the treasures of that miserable

serable nation. Under his administration, and by his means, the Roman luxury was received in *Palestine*, accompanied with the worst vices of that licentious people [*l*]. In a word, *Judea*, governed by Herod, groaned under all that corruption, which might be expected from the authority and the example of a prince, who, though a Jew in outward profession, was, in point of morals and practice, a contemner of all laws, human and divine.

The state of Judea after the death of Herod.

II. After the death of this tyrant, the Romans divided the government of *Palestine* between his sons. In this division the one half of *Judea* was given to Archelaus, with the title of Exarch; and the other was divided between his two brothers, Antipas and Philip. Archelaus was a corrupt and wicked prince, and followed the example of his father's crimes in such a manner, that the Jews, grown weary of his iniquitous administration, laid their complaints and grievances before Augustus, who delivered them from their oppressor, by banishing him from his dominions, about ten years after the death of Herod the Great. The kingdom of this dethroned prince was reduced to the form of a province, and added to the jurisdiction of the governor of *Syria*, to the great detriment of the Jews, whose heaviest calamities were owing to this change, and whose final destruction was its undoubted effect in the appointment of Providence.

The calamities that fell upon the Jewish nation.

III. However severe the authority was, which the Romans exercised over the Jews, yet it did not

[*l*] See on this subject, Christ. Noldii *Historia Idumæa*, which is annexed to Havercamp's edition of *Josephus*, vol. ii. p. 333. See also Basnage, *Histoire des Juifs*, tom. i. part I. p. 27. Noris, *Cenotaph. Pisan.* Prideaux, *History of the Jews*; Cellarius, his *Historia Herodum*, in the first part of his Academical Dissertations, p. 207; and above all, Josephus the Jewish historian.

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not extend to the entire suppression of all their civil and religious privileges. The Jews were, in some measure, governed by their own laws, and they were permitted the enjoyment of the religion they had received from the glorious founder of their church and state. The administration of religious ceremonies was committed, as before, to the high priest, and to the sanhedrim; to the former of whom the order of the priests and Levites was in the usual subordination; and the form of outward worship, except in a very few points, had suffered no visible change. But, on the other hand, it is impossible to express the inquietude and disgust, the calamities and vexations, which this unhappy nation suffered from the presence of the Romans, whom their religion obliged them to look upon as a polluted and idolatrous people, and in a more particular manner, from the avarice and cruelty of the Prætors, and the frauds and extortions of the Publicans. So that, all things considered, their condition, who lived under the government of the other sons of Herod, was much more supportable than the state of those, who were immediately subject to the Roman jurisdiction.

These calamities increased by the priests and rulers of the Jewish nation.

IV. It was not, however, from the Romans alone, that the calamities of this miserable people proceeded. Their own rulers multiplied their vexations, and hindered them from enjoying any little comforts that were left to them by the Roman magistrates. The leaders of the people, and the chief priests, were, according to the account of Josephus, profligate wretches, who had purchased their places by bribes, or by acts of iniquity, and who maintained their ill-acquired authority by the most flagitious and abominable crimes. The subordinate and inferior members were infected with the corruption of the head; the priests, and those who possessed any shadow of

of authority, were become dissolute and abandoned to the highest degree; while the multitude, set on by these corrupt examples, ran headlong into every sort of iniquity, and by their endless seditions, robberies, and extortions, armed against them both the justice of God, and the vengeance of men.

The Jewish religion much corrupted among the multitude.

V. Two religions flourished at this time in *Palestine*, *viz.* the Jewish and the Samaritan, whose respective followers beheld those of the opposite sect with the utmost aversion. The Jewish religion stands exposed to our view in the books of the Old Testament; but at the time of Christ's appearance, it had lost much of its original nature, and of its primitive aspect. Errors of a very pernicious kind had infected the whole body of the people, and the more learned part of the nation were divided upon points of the highest consequence. All looked for a deliverer, but not for such a one as God had promised. Instead of a meek and spiritual Saviour, they expected a formidable and warlike prince, to break off their chains, and set them at liberty from the Roman yoke. All regarded the whole of religion, as consisting in the rites appointed by Moses, and in the performance of some external acts of duty towards the Gentiles. They were all horribly unanimous in excluding from the hopes of eternal life all the other nations of the world; and, as a consequence of this odious system, they treated them with the utmost rigour and inhumanity, when any occasion was offered them. And, besides these corrupt and vicious principles, there prevailed among them several absurd and superstitious notions concerning the divine nature, invisible powers, magic, &c. which they had partly brought with them from the Babylonian captivity, and partly derived from the

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the Egyptians, Syrians, and Arabians, who lived in their neighbourhood.

And also among the doctors who were divided into various sects.

VI. Religion had not a better fate among the learned than among the multitude. The supercilious doctors, who vaunted their profound knowledge of the law, and their deep science in spiritual and divine things, were constantly shewing their fallibility and their ignorance by their religious differences, and were divided into a great variety of sects. Of these sects three have in a great measure eclipsed the rest, both by the number of their adherents, and also by the weight and authority which they acquired. These were the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes [*m*]. There is frequent mention made of the two former in the sacred writings; but the knowledge of the rites and doctrines of the latter, is to be derived from Josephus, Philo, and other historians. These three illustrious sects agreed in the fundamental principles of the Jewish religion, while, at the same time, they were involved in endless disputes upon points of the highest importance, and about matters in which the salvation of mankind was directly concerned; and their controversies could not but be highly detrimental to the rude and illiterate multitude, as every one must easily perceive.

The three famous Jewish sects divided upon various points;

VII. It may not be improper to mention here some of the principal matters that were debated among these famous sects. One of the main points of controversy was, *Whether the* WRITTEN LAW *alone, was of divine authority.* The Pharisees

[*m*] Besides these more illustrious sects, there were several of inferior note, which prevailed among the Jews at the time of Christ's appearance. The Herodians are mentioned by the sacred writers, the Gaulonites by Josephus, and others by Epiphanius and Hegesippus in Eusebius; nor is it rational to look upon these sects as fictitious.

sees added to this *law* another, which had been received by oral tradition. This the Sadducees and Essenes rejected as of no authority, and adhered to the *written law* as the only divine rule of obedience. They differed also in their opinions concerning the true *sense of the law*. For, while the Pharisees attributed to the sacred text a double sense, one of which was obvious, regarding only the *words*, and another mysterious, relating to the intimate nature of the *things* expressed; and while the Sadducees maintained that nothing further was delivered by the law, than that which was contained in the signification of the words; the Essenes, at least the greatest part of that sect, entertained an opinion different from both of these: They asserted, in their jargon, that the words of the law were absolutely void of all power, and that the things expressed by them, were the images of holy and celestial objects. These litigious subtilties and unintelligible wranglings, about the nature and sense of the divine word, were succeeded by a controversy of the greatest moment, concerning the rewards and punishments of the law, particularly with respect to their extent. The Pharisees were of opinion, that these rewards and punishments extended both to the soul and body, and that their duration was prolonged beyond the limits of this transitory state. The Sadducees assigned to them the same period that concludes this mortal life. The Essenes differed from both; and maintained that future rewards and punishments extended to the soul alone, and not to the body, which they considered as a mass of malignant matter, and as the prison of the immortal spirit.

But exercised reciprocal toleration towards each other.

VIII. These differences, in matters of such vast consequence, between the three famous sects above mentioned, produced none of those injurious

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rious and malignant effects, which are too often seen to arise from religious controversies. But such as have any acquaintance with the history of these times, will not be so far deceived by this specious appearance of moderation, as to attribute it to noble or generous principles. They will look through the fair outside, and see that their mutual fears of each other were the latent reason of this apparent charity and mutual forbearance. The Sadducees enjoyed the favour and protection of the great. The Pharisees, on the other hand, were extremely high in the esteem of the multitude. And hence they were both secured against the attempts of each other, and lived in peace, notwithstanding the diversity of their religious sentiments. The government of the Romans contributed also to the maintenance of this mutual toleration and tranquillity, as they were ever ready to suppress and punish whatever had the appearance of tumult and sedition. We may add to all this, that the Sadducean principles rendered that sect naturally averse to all sorts of altercation and tumult. Libertinism has for its objects ease and pleasure, and chooses rather to slumber in the arms of a fallacious security, than to expose itself to the painful activity, which is required both in the search and in the defence of truth.

Essenes.

IX. The Essenes had little occasion to quarrel with the other sects, as they dwelt generally in a rural solitude, far removed from the view and commerce of men. This singular sect, which was spread abroad through *Syria*, *Egypt*, and the neighbouring countries, maintained, that religion consisted wholly in contemplation and silence. By a rigorous abstinence also, and a variety of penitential exercises and mortifications, which they seem to have borrowed from the Egyptians,

tians [*n*], they endeavoured to arrive at still higher degrees of perfection in virtue. There prevailed however, among the members of this sect, a considerable difference both in point of opinion and discipline. Some passed their lives in a state of celibacy, and employed their time in educating and instructing the children of others. Others embraced the state of matrimony, which they considered as lawful, when entered into with the sole design of propagating the species, and not to satisfy the demands of lust. Those of the Essenes who dwelt in *Syria*, held the possibility of appeasing the Deity by sacrifices, though in a manner quite different from that of the Jews; by which, however, it appears that they had not utterly rejected the literal sense of the Mosaic law. But those who wandered in the deserts of *Egypt* were of very different sentiments; they maintained, that no offering was acceptable to God but that of a serene and composed mind, addicted to the contemplation of divine things; and it is manifest from hence, that they looked upon the law of Moses as an allegorical system of spiritual and mysterious truths, and renounced in its explication all regard to the outward letter [*o*].

X. Therapeutæ, of whom Philo the Jew makes particular mention in his treatise concerning *Contemplative Life*, are supposed to have been a branch of this sect. From this notion arose the division of the Essenes into *theoretical* and *practical*. The former of these were wholly devoted to contemplation, and are the same with the Therapeutæ; while the latter employed a part of their time in the performance of the duties

The Therapeutæ.

[*n*] See the Annotations of Holstenius to Porphyry's Life of Pythagoras, p. 11. of the edition published by Kuster.

[*o*] See Mosheim's observations on a small treatise of the learned Cudworth's concerning the true notion of the Lord's Supper, p. 4.

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ties of active life. Whether this division be accurate or not, is a matter which I will not take upon me to determine. But I see nothing in the laws or manners of the Therapeutæ, that should lead us to consider them as a branch of the Essenes; nor indeed has Philo asserted any such thing. There may have been, surely, many other fanatical tribes among the Jews, besides that of the Essenes; nor should a resemblance of principles always induce us to make a coalition of sects. It is, however, certain, that the Therapeutæ were neither Christians nor Egyptians, as some have erroneously imagined. They were undoubtedly Jews; nay, they gloried in that title, and styled themselves, with particular affectation, the true disciples of Moses, though their manner of life was equally repugnant to the institutions of that great lawgiver, and to the dictates of right reason, and shewed them to be a tribe of melancholy and wrong-headed Enthusiasts [*p*].

The moral doctrine of these sects.

XI. None of these sects, indeed, seemed to have the interests of real and true piety at heart; nor were their principles and discipline at all adapted to the advancement of pure and substantial virtue. The Pharisees courted popular applause by a vain ostentation of pretended sanctity, and an austere method of living, while, in reality, they were strangers to true holiness, and were inwardly defiled with the most criminal dispositions with which our Saviour frequently reproaches them. They also treated with more veneration the commandments and traditions of men, than the sacred precepts and laws of God.

[*p*] The principal writers who have given accounts of the Therapeutæ, are mentioned by Jo. Albert. Fabricius, in the ivth chapter of his *Lux Salutaris Evangelii toto orbe exoriens*, p. 55.

God [*q*]. The Sadducees, by denying a future state of rewards and punishments, removed at once, the most powerful incentives to virtue, and the most effectual restraints upon vice, and thus gave new vigour to every sinful passion, and a full encouragement to the indulgence of every irregular desire. As to the Essenes, they were a fanatical and superstitious tribe, who placed religion in a certain sort of seraphic indolence, and, looking upon piety to God as incompatible with any social attachment to men, dissolved, by this pernicious doctrine, all the great bonds of human society.

The multitude sunk in superstition, and corruption.

XII. While then such darkness, such errors, and dissensions prevailed among those, who assumed the character and authority of persons distinguished by their superior sanctity and wisdom, it will not be difficult to imagine, how totally corrupt the religion and morals of the multitude must have been. They were, accordingly, sunk in the most deplorable ignorance of God, and of divine things; and had no notion of any other way of rendering themselves acceptable to the Supreme Being, than by sacrifices, washings, and the other external rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic law. Hence proceeded that dissolution of manners, and that profligate wickedness, which prevailed among the Jews, during Christ's ministry upon earth. And hence the Divine Saviour compares that people to a flock of sheep, which wandered without a shepherd; and their doctors to men, who though deprived themselves of sight, yet pretended to shew the way to others [*r*].

The Cabbala, a source of many errors among the Jews.

XIII. To all these corruptions, both in point of doctrine and practice, which reigned among the

[*q*] Matth. xxiii. 13, 14, &c.
[*r*] Matth. x. 6. xv. 24, 25. John ix. 39.

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the Jews at the time of Christ's coming, we may add the attachment which many of them discovered to the tenets of the oriental philosophy concerning the origin of the world, and to the doctrine of the Cabbala, which was undoubtedly derived from thence. That considerable numbers of the Jews had imbibed the errors of this fantastic system, appears evidently both from the books of the New Testament, and from the ancient history of the Christian Church [*s*]: and it is also certain, that many of the Gnostic sects were founded by Jews. Those among that degenerate people, who adopted this chimerical philosophy, must have differed vastly from the rest in their opinions concerning the God of the Old Testament, the origin of the world, the character and doctrine of Moses, and the nature and ministry of the Messiah; since they maintained, that the Creator of this world was a being different from the Supreme God, and that his dominion over the human race was to be destroyed by the Messiah. Every one must see that this enormous system was fruitful of errors, destructive of the very foundations of Judaism.

The external worship of God corrupted also by vain rites and human inventions.

XIV. If any part of the Jewish religion was less disfigured and corrupted than the rest, it was, certainly, the form of external worship, which was established by the law of Moses. And yet many learned men have observed, that a great variety of rites were introduced into the service of the temple, of which no traces are to be found in the sacred writings. The institution of these additional ceremonies was manifestly owing to those changes and revolutions, which rendered the Jews more conversant with the nations

[*s*] See Joh. Chr. Wolf. *Biblioth Ebraica,* vol. ii. lib. vii. cap. i. sect. ix. p. 206.

tions round about them, than they had formerly been. For when they saw the sacred rites of the Greeks and Romans, they were taken with several of the ceremonies that were used in the worship of the Heathen deities, and did not hesitate to adopt them in the service of the true God, and add them as an ornament to the rites which they had received by divine appointment [*t*].

The causes of the corruption, in doctrine and morals, that reigned among the Jews.

XV. But whence such enormous degrees of corruption in that very nation which God had, in a peculiar manner, separated from an idolatrous world to be the depository of divine truth? Various causes may be assigned, in order to give a satisfactory account of this matter. *First*, It is certain, that the ancestors of those Jews, who lived in the time of our Saviour, had brought from *Chaldea*, and the neighbouring countries, many extravagant and idle fancies, which were utterly unknown to the original founders of the nation [*u*]. The conquest of *Asia* by Alexander the Great, was also an event, from which we may date a new accession of errors to the Jewish system; since in consequence of that revolution, the manners and opinions of the Greeks began to spread themselves among the Persians, Syrians, Arabians, and likewise among the Jews, who, before that period, were entirely unacquainted with letters and philosophy. We may, further, rank among the causes that contributed to corrupt the religion and manners of the Jews, their voyages into the adjacent countries, especially *Egypt* and *Phœnicia*, in pursuit of wealth. For, with

[*t*] See the learned work of Spencer, *De legibus Hebræorum*, in the ivth book of which he treats expressly of those Hebrew rites which were borrowed from the Gentile worship, vol. ii. p. 1086, edition of *Cambridge*.

[*u*] See Gale's observations on Jamblichus, *De mysteriis Egyptiorum*, p. 206. Josephus acknowledges the same thing in his *Jewish Antiquities*, book iii. ch. vii. sect. 2.

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the treasures of these corrupt and superstitious nations, they brought home also their pernicious errors, and their idle fictions, which were imperceptibly blended with their religious system. Nor ought we to omit, in this enumeration, the pestilential influence of the wicked reigns of Herod and his sons, and the enormous instances of idolatry, error, and licentiousness, which this unhappy people had constantly before their eyes in the religion and manners of the Roman governors and soldiers, which, no doubt, contributed much to the progress of their national superstition and corruption of manners. We might add here many more facts and circumstances, to illustrate further the matter under consideration; but these will be readily suggested to such as have the least acquaintance with the Jewish history from the time of the Maccabees.

Amidst this general corruption, some remains of piety were to be found.

XVI. It is indeed worthy of observation, that, corrupted as the Jews were with the errors and superstitions of the neighbouring nations, they still preserved a zealous attachment to the law of Moses, and were extremely careful that it should not suffer any diminution of its credit, or lose any the least degree of that veneration, that was due to its divine authority. Hence *Synagogues* were erected throughout the province of *Judea*, in which the people assembled for the purposes of divine worship, and to hear their doctors interpret and explain the holy scriptures. There were, besides, in the more populous towns, public schools, in which learned men were appointed to instruct the youth in the knowledge of divine things, and also in other branches of science [*w*]. And it is beyond all doubt, that these institutions contributed to maintain the laws in its primitive

[*w*] See Camp. Vitringa, *De synagoga vetere*, lib. iii. cap. v. p. 667. and lib. 1. cap. v. p. 133. vii. p. 156.

mitive authority, and to stem the torrent of abounding iniquity.

The Samaritans.

XVII. The Samaritans, who celebrated divine worship in the temple that was built on mount *Gerizim*, lay under the burden of the same evils that oppressed the Jews, with whom they lived in the bitterest enmity, and were also, like them, highly instrumental in increasing their own calamities. We learn from the most authentic histories of those times, that the Samaritans suffered as much as the Jews, from troubles and divisions fomented by the intrigues of factious spirits, though their religious sects were yet less numerous than those of the latter. Their religion, also, was much more corrupted than that of the Jews, as Christ himself declares in his conversation with the woman of *Samaria;* though it appears, at the same time, that their notions concerning the offices and ministry of the Messiah, were much more just and conformable to truth, than those which were entertained at *Jerusalem* [*x*]. Upon the whole, it is certain that the Samaritans mixed the profane errors of the Gentiles, with the sacred doctrines of the Jews,

☞ [*x*] Christ insinuates on the contrary, in the strongest manner, the superiority of the Jewish worship to that of the Samaritans, John iv. 22. See also, on this head, 2 Kings xvii. 29. The passage to which Dr. Mosheim refers, as a proof that the Samaritans had juster notions of the Messiah than the Jews, is the 25th verse of the chapter of St. John already cited, where the woman of Samaria says to Jesus, *I know that* Messiah *cometh, which is called* Christ; *when he is come, he will tell us all things.* But this passage seems much too vague to justify the conclusion of our learned historian. Besides, the confession of one person who may possibly have had some singular and extraordinary advantages, is not a proof that the nation in general entertained the same sentiments, especially since we know that the Samaritans had corrupted the service of God by a profane mixture of the grossest idolatries.

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and were excessively corrupted by the idolatrous customs of the Pagan nations [*y*].

The state of the Jews out of Palestine.

XVIII. The Jews multiplied so prodigiously, that the narrow bounds of *Palestine* were no longer sufficient to contain them. They poured, therefore, their increasing numbers into the neighbouring countries, and that with such rapidity, that, at the time of Christ's birth, there was scarcely a province in the empire, where they were not found carrying on commerce, and exercising other lucrative arts. They were maintained, in foreign countries, against injurious treatment and violence, by the special edicts and protection of the magistrates [*z*]; and this, indeed, was absolutely necessary, since, in most places, the remarkable difference of their religion and manners, from those of the other nations, exposed them to the hatred and indignation of the ignorant and bigotted multitude. All this appears to have been most singularly and wisely directed by the adorable hand of an interposing providence, to the end that this people, which was the sole depository of the true religion, and of the knowledge of one Supreme God, being spread abroad through the whole earth, might be every where, by their example, a reproach to superstition, contribute in some measure to check it, and thus prepare the way for that yet fuller discovery of divine truth, which was to shine upon the world from the ministry and gospel of the Son of God.

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[*y*] Those who desire an exact account of the principal authors that have written concerning the Samaritans, will find it in the learned work of Jo. Gottlob Carpzovius, entitled, *Critica. S. Vet. Testam.* part II. cap. iv. p. 595.

[*z*] See the account, published at *Leyden* 1712, by James Gronovius, of the Roman and Asiatic edicts in favour of the Jews, allowing them the free and secure exercise of their religion, throughout all the cities of the *Lesser Asia*.

CHAP. III.

Concerning the Life and Actions of Jesus Christ.

CENT. I. PART I. The birth of Christ.

I. THE errors and disorders that we have now been considering, required something far above human wisdom and power to dispel and remove them, and to deliver mankind from the miserable state to which they were reduced by them. Therefore towards the conclusion of the reign of Herod the Great, the Son of God descended upon earth, and taking upon him the human nature, appeared to men under the sublime characters of an infallible teacher, an all-sufficient mediator, and a spiritual and immortal king. The place of his birth was *Bethlehem*, in the land of *Palestine*. The year in which it happened, has not hitherto been fixed with certainty, notwithstanding the deep and laborious researches of the learned on that matter. There is nothing surprising in this when we consider that the first Christians laboured under the same difficulties, and were divided in their opinions, concerning the time of Christ's birth [*a*]. That which appears most probable, is, that it happened about a year and six months before the death of Herod, in the year of Rome 748 or 749 [*b*]. The uncertainty, however, of this point is of no sort of consequence. We know that the Sun of Righteousness has shone upon the world. And though we cannot fix the precise period in which he arose, this will not hinder

[*a*] The learned John Albert Fabricius has collected all the opinions of the learned, concerning the year of Christ's birth, in his *Bibliograph. Antiquar.* cap. vii. sect. x. p. 187.

[*b*] Matt. iii. 2, &c. John i. 22, &c.

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us from enjoying the direction and influence of his vital and salutary beams.

The accounts given of Christ during his infancy and youth.

II. Four inspired writers, who have transmitted to us an account of the life and actions of Jesus Christ, mention particularly his birth, his lineage, his family, and his parents; but they say very little concerning his infancy and his earlier youth. Not long after his birth, he was conducted by his parents into *Egypt*, that he might be there out of the reach of Herod's cruelty [*c*]. When he was but twelve years old, he disputed, in the temple, with the most learned of the Jewish doctors, concerning the sublime truths of religion. And the rest of his life, until the thirtieth year of his age, was spent in the obscurity of a private condition, and consecrated to the duties of filial obedience [*d*]. This is all that the wisdom of God hath permitted us to know, with certainty, of Christ, before he entered upon his public ministry; nor is the story of his having followed the trade of his adopted father Joseph built upon any sure foundation. There have been, indeed, several writers, who, either through the levity of a wanton imagination, or with a design to attract the admiration of the multitude, have invented a series of the most extravagant and ridiculous fables, in order to give an account of this obscure part of the Saviour's life [*e*].

John, the fore-runner of the Messiah.

III. Jesus began his public ministry in the thirtieth year of his age; and to render it more solemn and affecting to the Jews, a man, whose name was John, the son of a Jewish priest, a person

[*c*] Matt. ii. 13.

[*d*] Luke ii. 51, 52.

[*e*] See the account which the above-mentioned Albert Fabricius has given of these romantic triflers, in his *Codex Apocryphus, N. T.* tom. i.

person of great gravity also, and much respected on account of the austere dignity of his life and manners, was commanded by God to proclaim to the people the coming of the Messiah, that had been promised to their fathers. This extraordinary man called himself the fore-runner of the Messiah. Filled with a holy zeal and a divine fervour, he cried aloud to the Jewish nation, to depart from their transgression, and to purify their hearts, that they might thus partake of the blessings which the Son of God was now come to offer to the world. The exhortations of this respectable messenger were not without effect; and those who, moved by his solemn admonitions, had formed the resolution of correcting their evil dispositions and amending their lives, were initiated into the kingdom of the Redeemer by the ceremony of immersion, or baptism [*f*]. Christ himself, before he began his ministry, desired to be solemnly baptized by John in the waters of *Jordan*, that he might not, in any point, neglect to answer the demands of the Jewish law.

The life of Christ.

IV. It is not necessary to enter here into a particular detail of the life and actions of Jesus Christ. All Christians must be perfectly well acquainted with them. They must know, that, during the space of three years, and amidst the deepest trials of affliction and distress, he instructed the Jewish nation in the will and counsels of the Most High, and omitted nothing, in the course of his ministry, that could contribute either to gain the multitude, or to charm the wise. Every one knows, that his life was a continued scene of the most perfect sanctity, and the purest and most active virtue; not only without spot, but also beyond the reach of suspicion. And it is also well known, that by miracles of the most

 stupen-

[*f*] Matt. iii. 6. John i. 22.

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stupendous kind, and not more stupendous than salutary and beneficent, he displayed to the universe the truth of that religion which he brought with him from above, and demonstrated the reality of his divine commission in the most illustrious manner.

The election of the apostles, and of the LXX disciples.

V. As this divine religion was to be propagated to the utmost ends of the earth, it was necessary that Christ should choose a certain number of persons to accompany him constantly through the whole course of his ministry; that thus they might be faithful and respectable witnesses of the sanctity of his life, and the grandeur of his miracles, to the remotest nations; and also transmit to the latest posterity a genuine account of his sublime doctrines, and of the nature and end of the gospel dispensation. Therefore Jesus chose, out of the multitude that attended his discourses, twelve persons whom he separated from the rest by the name of *Apostles*. These men were illiterate, poor, and of mean extraction, and such alone were truly proper to answer the views of the divine Saviour. He avoided making use of the ministry of persons endowed with the advantages of fortune and birth, or enriched with the treasures of eloquence and learning, lest the fruits of this embassy, and the progress of the gospel, should be attributed to human and natural causes [*g*]. These apostles were sent but once to preach to the Jews during the life of Christ [*h*]. He chose to keep them about his own person, that they might be thoroughly instructed in the affairs of his kingdom. That the multitude however, might not be destitute of teachers to enlighten them with the knowledge of the truth, Christ appointed seventy disciples to preach the glad tidings of life eternal throughout the whole province of *Judea* [*i*]. VI.

[*g*] 1 Cor. i. 21. [*h*] Mat. x. 7. [*i*] Luke x. 1.

VI. The researches of the learned have been employed to find out the reason of Christ's fixing the number of the apostles to *twelve*, and that of the disciples to *seventy*, and various conjectures have been applied to the solution of this question. But since it is manifest, from the words of our Saviour himself [*k*], that he intended the number of the twelve apostles as an allusion to that of the tribes of Israel; it can scarcely be doubted, that he was willing to insinuate by this appointment that he was the supreme lord and high-priest of these twelve tribes, into which the Jewish nation was divided. And as the number of disciples answers evidently to that of the senators, of whom the council of the people, or the sanhedrim was composed, there is a high degree of probability in the conjecture of those, who think that Christ, by the choice of the *seventy*, designed to admonish the Jews, that the authority of their sanhedrim was now at an end, and that all power, with respect to religious matters, was vested in him alone.

Why the number of the apostles was fixed to XII. and that of the disciples to LXX.

VII. The ministry of the divine Saviour was confined to the Jews; nor while he remained upon earth, did he permit his apostles or disciples to extend their labours beyond this distinguished nation [*l*]. At the same time, if we consider the illustrious acts of mercy and omnipotence, that were performed by Christ, it will be natural to conclude, that his fame must have been very soon spread abroad in other countries. We learn from writers of no small note, that Abgarus, king of *Edessa*, being seized with a severe and dangerous illness, wrote to our blessed Lord to implore his assistance; and that Jesus not only sent him a gracious answer, but also accompanied it with his picture, as a mark of his

Christ's fame extends beyond Judea.

[*k*] Matth. xix. 28. Luke xxii. 30.
[*l*] Matth. x. 5, 6. xv. 24.

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his esteem for that pious prince [*m*]. These letters are still extant. But they are justly looked upon as fictitious by most writers, who also go yet farther, and treat the whole story of Abgarus as entirely fabulous, and unworthy of credit [*n*]. I will not pretend to insert the genuineness of these letters; but I see no reason of sufficient weight to destroy the credibility of the whole story, which is supposed to have given occasion to them [*o*].

VIII.

[*m*] Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* lib. 1. cap. xiii. p. 21. Jo. Albert Fabric. *Codex Apocryphus N. T.* tom. i. p. 317.

[*n*] See Basnage, *Histoire des Juifs*, vol. i. cap. xviii. p. 500. As also Theoph. Sigf. Bayerus, *Historia Edessena et Osroëna*, lib. iii. p. 104. Jos. Simon Assemanus, *Biblioth. Oriental. Clement. Vaticanæ*, tom. i. p. 554.

☞ [*o*] There is no author who has discussed this question (concerning the authenticity of the letters of Christ and Abgarus, and the truth of the whole story) with such learning and judgment, as the late Mr. Jones, in the second volume of his excellent work, entitled, *A New and Full Method of settling the Canonical Authority of the New Testament.* Notwithstanding the opinions of such celebrated names, as Parker, Cave, and Grabe, in favour of these letters, and the history to which they relate, Mr. Jones has offered reasons to prove the whole fictitious, which seem unanswerable, independent of the authorities of Rivet, Chemnitius, Walther, Simon, Du Pin, Wake, Spanheim, Fabricius, and Le Clerc, which he opposes to the three above mentioned. It is remarkable that this story is not mentioned by any writer before Eusebius; that it is but little taken notice of by succeeding writers; that the whole affair was unknown to Christ's apostles, and to the Christians their contemporaries, as is manifest from the early disputes about the method of receiving Gentile converts into the church, which this story, had it been true, must have entirely decided. As to the letters, no doubt can be made of their spuriousness; since, if Christ had written a letter to Abgarus, it would have been a part of sacred Scripture, and would have been placed at the head of all the books of the New Testament. See Lardner's *Collection of Ancient Jewish, and Heathen Testimonies*, vol. i. p. 297, &c. It must be observed in behalf of Eusebius, that he relates this story as drawn from the archives of Edessa.

VIII. A great number of the Jews, struck with those illustrious marks of a divine authority and power, that shone forth in the ministry and actions of Christ, regarded him as the Son of God, the true Messiah. The rulers of the people, and more especially the chief priests and Pharisees, whose licentiousness and hypocrisy he censured with a noble and generous freedom, laboured with success, by the help of their passions, to extinguish in their breasts the conviction of his celestial mission; or, at least, to suppress the effects it was adapted to produce upon their conduct. Fearing also lest the ministry of Christ should tend to diminish their credit, and to deprive them of the advantages they derived from the impious abuse of their authority in religious matters; they laid snares for his life, which, for a considerable time, were without effect. They succeeded, at length, by the infernal treason of an apostate disciple, by the treachery of Judas, who discovered the retreat which his divine Master had chosen for the purposes of meditation and repose, and thus delivered him into the merciless hands of a brutal soldiery.

The success of Christ's ministry.

IX. In consequence of this, Jesus was first brought before the Jewish high priest and sanhedrim, before whom he was accused of having violated the law, and blasphemed the majesty of God. Dragged from thence to the tribunal of Pilate the Roman prætor, he was there charged with seditious enterprises, and with treason against Cæsar. Both these accusations were so evidently false, and destitute even of every appearance of truth, that they must have been rejected by any judge, who acted upon the principles of common equity. But the clamours of an enraged populace, set on by the impious instigations of their priests and rulers, intimidated Pilate, and engaged him, though with the utmost reluctance, and

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and in opposition to the dictates of his conscience, to pronounce a capital sentence against Christ. The divine Saviour behaved with inexpressible dignity under this heavy trial. As the end of his mission was to make expiation for the sins of men, so when all things were ready, and when he had finished the work of his glorious ministry, he placidly submitted to the death of the cross, and, with a serene and voluntary resignation, committed his spirit into the hands of the Father.

His resurrection.

X. After Jesus had remained three days in the sepulchre, he resumed that life which he had voluntarily laid down; and, rising from the dead, declared to the universe, by that triumphant act, that the divine justice was satisfied, and the paths of salvation and immortality rendered accessible to the human race. He conversed with his disciples during forty days after his resurrection, and employed that time in instructing them more fully concerning the nature of his kingdom. Many wise and important reasons prevented his shewing himself publicly at *Jerusalem*, to confound the malignity and unbelief of his enemies. He contented himself with manifesting the certainty of his glorious resurrection to a sufficient number of faithful and credible witnesses; foreseeing, perhaps, that if he appeared in public, those malicious unbelievers, who had formerly attributed his miracles to the power of magic, would now represent his resurrection, as a phantom, or vision, produced by the influence of infernal powers. After having remained upon earth during the space of time above mentioned, and given to his disciples a divine commission to preach the glad tidings of salvation and immortality to the human race, he ascended into heaven, in their presence, and resumed the enjoyment of that glory which he was possessed of before the worlds were created.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

Concerning the prosperous events that happened to the church during this century.

CENT. I. PART I.

I. JESUS, being ascended into heaven, soon shewed his afflicted disciples, that, though invisible to mortal eyes, he was still their omnipotent protector, and their benevolent guide. About fifty days after his departure from them, he gave them the first proof of that majesty and power to which he was exalted, by the effusion of the Holy Ghost upon them according to his promise [*p*]. The consequences of this grand event were surprising and glorious, infinitely honourable to the Christian religion, and the divine mission of its triumphant author. For no sooner had the apostles received this precious gift, this celestial guide, than their ignorance was turned into light, their doubts into certainty, their fears into a firm and invincible fortitude, and their former backwardness into an ardent and inextinguishable zeal, which led them to undertake their sacred office with the utmost intrepidity and alacrity of mind. This marvellous event was attended with a variety of gifts: particularly the gift of tongues, so indispensibly necessary to qualify the apostles to preach the gospel to the different nations. These holy apostles were also filled with a perfect persuasion, founded on Christ's express promise, that the divine presence would perpetually accompany them, and shew itself by miraculous interpositions, as often as the success of their ministry should render this necessary.

The apostles filled with the Holy Ghost.

II. Relying upon these celestial succours, the apostles began their glorious ministry, by preaching the gospel, according to Christ's positive command,

Preach the gospel first to the Jews and Samaritans.

[*p*] Acts ii. 1, &c.

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command, first to the Jews, and by endeavouring to bring that deluded people to the knowledge of the truth [*q*]. Nor were their labours unsuccessful, since, in a very short time, many thousands were converted, by the influence of their ministry, to the Christian faith [*r*]. From the Jews, they passed to the Samaritans, to whom they preached with such efficacy, that great numbers of that nation acknowledged the Messiah [*s*]. And, after that they had exercised their ministry, during several years, at *Jerusalem*, and brought to a sufficient degree of consistence and maturity the Christian churches which were founded in *Palestine* and the adjacent countries, they extended their views further, carried the divine lamp of the gospel to all the nations of the world, and saw their labours crowned, almost every where, with the most abundant fruits.

The election of a new apostle.

III. No sooner was Christ exalted on high, than the apostles determined to render their number complete, as it had been fixed by their divine Master, and accordingly to choose, in the place of Judas, who had desperately perished by his own hands, a man endowed with such degrees of sanctity and wisdom, as were necessary in a station of such vast importance. Having therefore gathered together the small assembly of Christians which had then been formed at *Jerusalem*, two men, remarkable for their piety and faith, were proposed as the most worthy to stand candidates for this sacred office. These men were Matthias and Barnabas, the former of whom was, either by lot, (which is the most general opinion,) or by a plurality of voices of the assembly there present, chosen to the dignity of an apostle [*t*].

IV.

[*q*] Luke xxiv. 47. Acts i. 8. xiii. 46. [*r*] Acts ii. 41. iv. 4. [*s*] Acts i. 8. viii. 14. [*t*] Acts i. 26.

IV. All these apostles were men without education, and absolutely ignorant of letters and philosophy; and yet in the infancy of the Christian church, it was necessary that there should be, at least, some one defender of the gospel, who, versed in the learned arts, might be able to combat the Jewish doctors and the Pagan philosophers with their own arms. For this purpose, Jesus himself, by an extraordinary voice from heaven, called to his service a thirteenth apostle, whose name was Saul, (afterwards Paul), and whose acquaintance both with Jewish and Grecian learning was very considerable [*u*]. This extraordinary man, who had been one of the most virulent enemies of the Christians, became their most glorious and triumphant defender. Independent of the miraculous gifts with which he was enriched, he was naturally possessed of an invincible courage, an amazing force of genius, and a spirit of patience which no fatigue could overcome, and which no sufferings or trials could exhaust. To these the cause of the gospel, under the divine appointment, owed a considerable part of its rapid progress and surprising success, as the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles of St. Paul, abundantly testify.

Paul called to be an apostle.

V. The first Christian church, founded by the apostles, was that of *Jerusalem*, which was the model of all those that were afterwards erected during this first century. This church was, however, governed by the apostles themselves, to whom both the *elders*, and those who were entrusted with the care of the poor, even the *deacons*, were subject. The people, though they had not abandoned the Jewish worship, held, however, separate assemblies, in which they were instructed by the apostles and elders, prayed together, celebrated the holy Supper in remembrance of Christ, of

The church of Jerusalem, how constituted.

[*u*] Acts ix. 1.

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of his death and sufferings, and the salvation offered to mankind through him; and at the conclusion of these meetings, they testified their mutual love, partly by their liberality to the poor, and partly by sober and friendly repasts [*w*], which from thence were called *feasts of charity*. Among the virtues which distinguished the rising church in this its infancy, that of charity to the poor and needy shone in the first rank, and with the brightest lustre. The rich supplied the wants of their indigent brethren with such liberality and readiness, that, as St. Luke tells us, among the primitive disciples of Christ, all things were *in common* [*x*]. This expression has, however, been greatly abused, and has been made to signify a *community of rights, goods, or possessions*, than which interpretation nothing is more groundless, nothing more false. For from a mutitude of reasons, as well as from the express words of St. Peter [*y*], it is abundantly manifest that the community, which is implied in mutual *use* and mutual liberality, is the only thing intended in this passage [*z*].

Many churches founded by the apostles in different places.

VI. The apostles having finished their work at *Jerusalem*, went from thence to employ their labours in other nations, travelled, with this view, over a great part of the known world, and in a short time planted a vast number of churches among the Gentiles. Several of these are mentioned in the sacred writings, particularly in the *Acts*

[*w*] Acts ii. 42. [*x*] Acts ii. 44. iv. 32.
[*y*] Acts v. 4.

☞ [*z*] This is proved with the utmost evidence by Dr. Mosheim, in a dissertation concerning the true nature of that community of goods, which is said to have taken place in the church of *Jerusalem*. This learned discourse is to be found in the second volume of our author's incomparable work entitled, *Dissertationes ad Historiam Ecclesiasticum pertinentes*.

Acts of the Apostles [a]; though these are, undoubtedly, but a small part of the churches, which were founded, either by the apostles themselves, or by their disciples under their immediate direction. The distance of time, and the want of records, leave us at a loss with respect to many interesting circumstances of the peregrinations of the apostles; nor have we any certain, or precise accounts of the limits of their voyages, of the particular countries where they sojourned, nor of the times and places in which they finished their glorious course. The stories that are told concerning their arrival and exploits among the Gauls, the English, the Spaniards, the Germans, the Americans, the Chinese, the Indians, and the Russians, are too romantic in their nature, and of too recent a date, to be received by an impartial inquirer after truth. The greatest part of these fables were forged after the time of Charlemagne, when most of the Christian churches contended about the antiquity of their origin with as much vehemence as the Arcadians, Egyptians, and Greeks, disputed formerly about their seniority and precedence.

Christ respected among the Gentiles.

VII. At the same time, the beauty and excellence of the Christian religion excited the admiration of the thinking part of mankind, wherever the apostles directed their course. Many, who were not willing to adopt the whole of its doctrines, were, nevertheless, as appears from undoubted records, so struck with the account of Christ's life and actions, and so charmed with the sublime purity of his precepts, that they ranked him in the number of the greatest heroes,

[a] The names of the churches, planted by the apostles in the different nations are specified in a work of Phil. James Hartman, *De rebus gestis Christianorum sub apostolis*, cap. vii. p. 107, and also in that of F. Albert Fabricius, entitled, *Lux Evangelii toti orbi exoriens*, cap. v. p. 83, &c.

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nay, even of the gods themselves. Great numbers kept with the utmost care, in their houses, pictures or images of the divine Saviour and his apostles, which they treated with the highest marks of veneration and respect [*b*]. And so illustrious was the fame of Christ's power grown, after his resurrection from the dead, and the miraculous gifts shed from on high upon his apostles, that the Emperor Tiberius is said to have proposed his being enrolled among the gods of *Rome*, which the opposition of the senate hindered from taking effect. Many have doubted of the truth of this story: there are, however, several authors of the first note who have declared, that the reasons alleged for the truth of this fact are such as have removed their doubts, and appeared to them satisfactory and conclusive [*c*]. VIII.

[*b*] This is particularly mentioned by Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* lib. vii. cap. xviii. p. 265. and by Irenæus, lib. i. c. xxv.

[*c*] See Theod. Hasæus. *De decreto Tiberii, quo Christum referre voluit in numerum Deorum;* as also a very learned letter, written in defence of the truth of this fact, by the celebrated Christopher Ielius, and published in the *Bibliotheque Germanique*, tom. xxxii. p. 147. and tom. xxxiii. p. 12. [We may add to this note of Dr. Mosheim, that the late learned professor Altmann published at *Bern*, in the year 1755, an ingenious pamphlet upon this subject, entitled *Disquisitio Historico-critica de Epistola* Pontii Pilati *ad* Tiberium, *qua* Christi *miracula, mors, et resurrectio recensebantur.* This author makes it appear, that though the letter, which some have attributed to Pilate, and which is extant in several authors, be manifestly spurious, yet it is no less certain, that Pilate sent to Tiberius an account of the death and resurrection of Christ. See the *Biblioth. des sciences et des beaux arts*, published at the *Hague*, tom. vi. p. 360. This matter has been examined anew with his usual diligence and accuracy by the learned Dr. Lardner, in the third volume of his *Collection of Jewish and Heathen Testimonies to the truth of the Christian Religion*, &c. p. 310, &c. He thinks that the testimonies of Justin Martyr and Tertullian, who in apologies for Christianity, that were presented, or at least addressed to the emperor and senate of *Rome*, or to Magistrates of high authority in the empire, affirm, that Pilate sent to Tiberius an account of the death

The causes of the rapid propagation of the gospel.

VIII. When we consider the rapid progress of Christianity among the Gentile nations, and the poor and feeble instruments by which this great and amazing event was immediately effected, we must naturally have recourse to an omnipotent and invisible hand, as its true and proper cause. For unless we suppose here a divine interposition, how was it possible that men, destitute of all human aid, without credit or riches, learning or eloquence could, in so short a time, persuade a considerable part of mankind to abandon the religion of their ancestors? How was it possible, that an handful of apostles, who, as fishermen and publicans, must have been contemned by their own nation, and as Jews, must have been odious to all others, could engage the learned and the mighty, as well as the simple and those of low degree, to forsake their favourite prejudices, and to embrace a new religion which was an enemy to their corrupt passions? And, indeed, there were undoubted marks of a celestial power perpetually attending their ministry. There was, in their very language, an incredible energy, an amazing power of sending light into the understanding, and conviction into the heart. To this were added, the commanding influence of stupendous miracles, the foretelling of future events, the power of discerning the secret thoughts and intentions of the heart, a magnanimity superior to all difficulties, a contempt of riches and honours, a serene tranquillity in the face of death, and an invincible patience under torments still more dreadful than death itself; and all this accompanied with lives free from all stain, and

death and resurrection of Christ, deserve some regard; though some writers, and particularly Orosius, have made alterations and additions in the original narration of Tertullian, that are too much adapted to diminish the credibility of the whole.]

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adorned with the constant practice of sublime virtue. Thus were the Messengers of the divine Saviour, the heralds of his spiritual and immortal kingdom, furnished for their glorious work, as the unanimous voice of ancient history so loudly testifies. The event sufficiently declares this; for without these remarkable and extraordinary circumstances, no rational account can be given of the rapid propagation of the gospel throughout the world.

Miraculous gifts communicated by the apostles.

IX. What indeed contributed still further to this glorious event, was, the power vested in the apostles of transmitting to their disciples these miraculous gifts. For many of the first Christians were no sooner baptized according to Christ's appointment, and dedicated to the service of God by solemn prayer and the imposition of hands, than they spoke languages they had never known or learned before, foretold future events, healed the sick by pronouncing the name of Jesus, restored the dead to life, and performed many things above the reach of human power [*d*]. And it is no wonder if men, who had the power of communicating to others these marvellous gifts, appeared great and respectable, wherever they exercised their glorious ministry.

The progress of the gospel attributed to absurd causes.

X. Such then were the true causes of that amazing rapidity with which the Christian religion spread itself upon earth; and those who pretend to assign other reasons of this surprising event, indulge themselves in idle fictions, which must disgust every attentive observer of men and things. In vain, therefore, have some imagined, that the extraordinary liberality of the Christians to their poor, was a temptation to the more indolent and corrupt part of the multitude to embrace

[*d*] See Pfanner's learned treatise, *De charismatibus sive donis miraculosis antiquæ ecclesiæ*, published at *Francfort*, 1683.

brace the gospel. Such malignant and superficial reasoners do not consider, that those who embraced this divine religion exposed their lives to the most imminent danger; nor have they attention enough to recollect, that neither lazy nor vicious members were suffered to remain in the society of Christians. Equally vain is the invention of those, who imagine, that the profligate lives of the Heathen priests was an occasion of the conversion of many to Christianity. For, though this might indeed give them a disgust at the religion of these unworthy ministers, yet it could not, alone, attach them to that of Jesus, which offered them from the world no other prospects than those of poverty, infamy, and death. The person who could embrace the gospel, solely from the motive now mentioned, must have reasoned in this senseless and extravagant manner: "The ministers of that religion which I have "professed from my infancy, lead profligate "lives: therefore, I will become a Christian, "join myself to that body of men who are con-"demned by the laws of the state, and thus ex-"pose my life and fortune to the most imminent "danger.

CHAP. V.

Concerning the calamitous events that happened to the church.

The Jews persecute the Christians in Palestine.

I. THE innocence and virtue that distinguished so eminently the lives of Christ's servants, and the apostles' purity of the doctrine they taught, were not sufficient to defend them against the virulence and malignity of the Jews. The priests and rulers of that abandoned people, not only loaded with injuries and reproach the apostles of

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Jesus and their disciples, but condemned as many of them as they could, to death, and executed in the most irregular and barbarous manner their sanguinary decrees. The murder of Stephen, of James the son of Zebedee, and of James, surnamed the *Just*, bishop of *Jerusalem*, furnish dreadful examples of the truth of what we here advance [*e*]. This odious malignity of the Jewish doctors, against the heralds of the gospel, was undoubtedly owing to a secret apprehension that the progress of Christianity would destroy the credit of Judaism, and bring on the ruin of their pompous ceremonies.

And also by those in foreign countries.

II. The Jews who lived out of *Palestine*, in the Roman provinces, did not yield to those of *Jerusalem* in point of cruelty to the innocent disciples of Christ. We learn from the history of the *Acts of the Apostles*, and other records of unquestionable authority, that they spared no labour, but zealously seized every occasion of animating the magistrates against the Christians, and setting on the multitude to demand their destruction. The high priest of the nation, and the Jews who dwelt in *Palestine*, were instrumental in exciting the rage of these foreign Jews against the infant church, by sending messengers to exhort them, not only to avoid all intercourse with the Christians, but also to persecute them in the most vehement manner [*f*]. For this inhuman order, they endeavoured to find out the most plausible pretexts; and, therefore, they gave out, that the Christians were enemies to the Roman emperor, since

[*e*] The martyrdom of Stephen is recorded in the *Acts of the Apostles*, vii. 55; and that of James the son of Zebedee, Acts xii. 1, 2; that of James the *Just*, bishop of *Jerusalem*, is mentioned by Josephus in his *Jewish Antiquities*, book xx. chap. viii. and by Eusebius, in his *Eccles. History*, book ii. chap. xxiii.

[*f*] See the Dialogue of Justin Martyr, with Trypho the Jew, p. 51, 52, 53, 109, 138, 318.

since they acknowledged the authority of a certain person whose name was Jesus, whom Pilate had punished capitally as a malefactor by a most righteous sentence, and on whom, nevertheless, they conferred the royal dignity. These perfidious insinuations had the intended effect, and the rage of the Jews against the Christians was conveyed from father to son, from age to age; so that the church of Christ had, in no period of time, more bitter and desperate enemies than that very people, to whom the immortal Saviour was more especially sent.

The Jews severely punished for their treatment of Christ, and his disciples.

III. The Supreme Judge of the world did not let the barbarous conduct of this perfidious nation go unpunished. The most signal marks of divine justice pursued them, and the cruelties they had exercised upon Christ and his disciples, were dreadfully avenged. The God, who had for so many ages protected the Jews with an outstretched arm, withdrew his aid. He permitted *Jerusalem*, with its famous temple, to be destroyed by Vespasian and his son Titus, an innumerable multitude of this devoted people to perish by the sword, and the greatest part of those that remained to groan under the yoke of a severe bondage. Nothing can be more affecting than the account of this terrible event, and the circumstantial description of the tremendous calamities which attended it, as they are given by Josephus, himself a Jew, and also a spectator of this horrid scene. From this period the Jews experienced, in every place, the hatred and contempt of the Gentile nations, still more than they had formerly done. And in these their calamities, the predictions of Christ were amply fulfilled, and his divine mission further illustrated.

The ten Gentile persecutions.

IV. However virulent the Jews were against the Christians, yet, upon many occasions, they wanted power to execute their cruel purposes.

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This was not the case with the Heathen nations; and, therefore, from them the Christians suffered the severest calamities. The Romans are said to have pursued the Christians with the utmost violence in ten persecutions [*g*], but this number is not verified by the ancient history of the church. For if, by these persecutions, such only are meant as were singularly severe and universal throughout the empire, then it is certain, that these amount not to the number above mentioned. And, if we take the provincial and less remarkable persecutions into the account, they far exceed it. In the fifth century, certain Christians, led by some passages of the holy scriptures, and by one especially in the *Revelations* [*h*], to imagine that the church was to suffer ten calamities of a most grievous nature. To this notion, therefore, they endeavoured, though not all in the same way, to accommodate the language of history, even against the testimony of those ancient records, from whence alone history can speak with authority [*i*].

Laws made against the Christians.

V. Nero was the first emperor who enacted laws against the Christians. In this he was followed by Domitian, Marcus Antoninus the philosopher, Severus, and the other emperors who indulged the prejudices they had imbibed against the disciples of Jesus. All the edicts of these different princes were not, however, equally unjust, nor made with the same views, and for the same reasons. Were they now extant as they were collected by the celebrated lawyer Domitius, in his book concerning the *duty of a Proconsul*, they would

[*g*] The learned J. Albert Fabricius has given us a list of the authors that have written concerning these persecutions, in his *Lux Evangelii orbi universo exoriens*, cap. vii. p. 133.

[*h*] Rev. xvii. 14.

[*i*] See Sulpitius Severus, book ii. ch. xxxiii. as also Austin, *De civitate Dei*, book xviii. ch. lii.

would undoubtedly cast a great light upon the history of the church, under the persecuting emperors [*k*]. At present we must, in many cases, be satisfied with probable conjectures, for want of more certain evidence.

The causes of the persecution of the Christians by the Romans.

VI. Before we proceed further in this part of our history, a very natural curiosity calls us to inquire, how it happened that the Romans, who were troublesome to no nation on account of their religion, and who suffered even the Jews to live under their own laws, and follow their own method of worship, treated the Christians alone with such severity? This important question seems still more difficult to be solved, when we consider, that the excellent nature of the Christian religion, and its admirable tendency to promote both the public welfare of the state, and the private felicity of the individual, entitled it, in a singular manner, to the favour and protection of the reigning powers. One of the principal reasons of the severity with which the Romans persecuted the Christians, notwithstanding these considerations, seems to have been the abhorrence and contempt with which the latter regarded the religion of the empire, which was so intimately connected with the form, and indeed, with the very essence of its political constitution. For, though the Romans gave an unlimited toleration to all religions which had nothing in their tenets dangerous to the commonwealth, yet they would not permit that of their ancestors, which was established by the laws of the state, to be turned into derision, nor the people

[*k*] TheCollection of the imperial edicts against the Christians, made by Domitius, and now lost, is mentioned by Lactantius, in his *Divine Institutes*, book v. chap. xi. Such of these edicts as have escaped the ruins of time, are learnedly illustrated by Franc. Balduinus, in a small treatise, entitled, *Commentarium ad edicta veterum principum Romanorum de Christianis.* Of which a second edition was published by Mr. Gundling, at *Hall*, 1727.

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people to be drawn away from their attachment to it. These, however, were the two things which the Christians were charged with, and that justly, though to their honour. They dared to ridicule the absurdities of the Pagan superstition, and they were ardent and assiduous in gaining proselytes to the truth. Nor did they only attack the religion of *Rome*, but also all the different shapes and forms under which superstition appeared in the various countries where they exercised their ministry. From hence the Romans concluded, that the Christian sect was not only unsupportably daring and arrogant, but, moreover, an enemy to the public tranquillity, and every way proper to excite civil wars and commotions in the empire. It is, probably, on this account, that Tacitus reproaches them with the odious character of *haters of mankind* [*l*], and styles the religion of Jesus a *destructive superstition;* and that Suetonius speaks of the Christians, and their doctrine, in terms of the same kind [*m*].

Other causes of these persecutions.

VII. Another circumstance that irritated the Romans against the Christians, was the simplicity of their worship, which resembled in nothing the sacred rights of any other people. The Christians had neither sacrifices, nor temples, nor images, nor oracles, nor sacerdotal orders; and this was sufficient to bring upon them the reproaches of an ignorant multitude, who imagined that there could

[*l*] *Annal.* lib. xv. cap. xliv.

[*m*] *In Nerone*, cap. xvi. These odious epithets, which Tacitus gives to the Christians and their religion, as likewise the language of Suetonius, who calls Christianity a *poisonous, or malignant superstition (maleficia superstitio)*, are founded upon the same reasons. A sect, which not only could not endure, but even laboured to abolish, the religious systems of the Romans, and also those of all the other nations of the universe, appeared to the short-sighted and superficial observers of religious matters, as enemies of mankind, and persons possessed with a mortal hatred of all the human race.

could be no religion without these. Thus they were looked upon as a sort of Atheists; and, by the Roman laws those who were chargeable with Atheism were declared the pests of human society. But this was not all: the sordid interests of a multitude of lazy and selfish priests were immediately connected with the ruin and oppression of the Christian cause. The public worship of such an immense number of deities, was a source of subsistence, and even of riches, to the whole rabble of priests and augurs, and also to a multitude of merchants and artists. And as the progress of the gospel threatened the ruin of this religious traffic, and the profits it produced, this raised up new enemies to the Christians, and armed the rage of mercenary superstition against their lives and their cause [*n*].

The most odious calumnies spread abroad against the Christians.

VIII. To accomplish more speedily the ruin of the Christians, those whose interests were incompatible with the progress of the gospel, loaded them with the most opprobrious calumnies, which were too easily received as truth, by the credulous and unthinking multitude, among whom they were dispersed with the utmost industry. We find a large account of these perfidious and ill-grounded reproaches in the writings of the first defenders of the Christian cause [*o*]. And these, indeed

[*n*] This observation is verified by the story of Demetrius the silver-smith, Acts xix. 25. and by the following passage in the 97th letter of the xth book of Pliny's epistles; "The "temples, which were *almost deserted*, begin to be frequented "again: and the sacred rites, which have been long neglect-"ed, are again performed.—The victims, which have had hi-"therto *few purchasers*, begin to come again to the mar-"ket," &c.

[*o*] See the laborious work of Christ. Kortholt, entitled, *Paganus obtrectator, seu de calumniis Gentilium in Christianos*; to which may be added, Jo. Jac. Huldricus, *De calumniis Gentilium in Christianos*, published at *Zurich*, in 8vo, in the year 1744.

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indeed were the only arms they had to oppose the truth; since the excellence of the gospel, and the virtue of its ministers and followers, left its enemies no resources but calumny and persecution. Nothing can be imagined, in point of virulence and fury, that they did not employ for the ruin of the Christians. They even went so far as to persuade the multitude, that all the calamities, wars, tempests, and diseases that afflicted mankind, were judgments sent down by the angry gods, because the Christians, who contemned their authority, were suffered in the empire [*p*].

The punishments and judicial forms used against the Christians.

IX. The various kinds of punishments, both capital and corrective, which were employed against the Christians, are particularly described by learned men who have written professedly upon that subject [*q*]. The forms of proceeding, used in their condemnation, may be seen in the *Acts of the Martyrs*, in the letters of Pliny and Trajan, and other ancient monuments [*r*]. These judicial forms were very different at different times, and changed naturally, according to the mildness or severity of the laws enacted by the different emperors against the Christians. Thus, at one time we see the most diligent search made after the followers of Christ; at another, all perquisition suspended, and positive accusation and information only allowed. Under one reign we see them, upon their being proved Christians, or their confessing themselves such, immediately dragged away to execution, unless they prevent their punishment by apostasy; under another, we see

[*p*] See Arnobius *Contra gentes.*

[*q*] See for this purpose Ant. Gallonius and Gasp. Sagittarius, *De cruciatibus martyrum.*

[*r*] See Bohmer, *Juris Eccles. Protestant.* tom. iv. lib. v. *Decretal.* tit. 1. sect. 32. p. 617.

see inhuman magistrates endeavouring to compel them, by all sorts of tortures, to renounce their profession.

Martyrs and confessors.

X. They who, in the perilous times of the church, fell by the hand of bloody persecution, and expired in the cause of the divine Saviour, were called *martyrs;* a term borrowed from the sacred writings, which signifies *witnesses*, and thus expresses the glorious testimony which these magnanimous believers bore to the truth. The title of *confessors* was given to such, as in the face of death, and at the expence of honours, fortune, and all the other advantages of the world, had confessed with fortitude, before the Roman tribunals, their firm attachment to the religion of Jesus. The veneration that was paid to both *martyrs* and *confessors* is hardly credible. The distinguishing honours and privileges they enjoyed, the authority with which their counsels and decisions were attended, would furnish ample matter for a history apart; and such an undertaking might be highly useful in many respects. There was, no doubt, as much wisdom as justice, in treating with such respect, and investing with such privileges, these Christian heroes; since nothing was more adapted to encourage others to suffer with cheerfulness in the cause of Christ. But, as the best and wisest institutions are generally perverted by the weakness or corruption of men, from their original purpose; so the authority and privileges granted, in the beginning to martyrs and confessors, became, in process of time, a support to superstition, an incentive to enthusiasm, and a source of innumerable evils and abuses.

Their number.

XI. The first three or four ages of the church were stained with the blood of martyrs, who suffered for the name of Jesus. The greatness of their number is acknowledged by all who have a competent acquaintance with ancient history, and who

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who have examined that matter with any degree of impartiality. It is true, the learned Dodwell has endeavoured to invalidate this unanimous decision of the ancient historians [*s*], and to diminish considerably the number of those that suffered death for the gospel. And, after him, several writers have maintained his opinion, and asserted, that whatever may have been the calamities that the Christians in general, suffered for their attachment to the gospel, very few were put to death on that account. This hypothesis has been warmly opposed, as derogating from that divine power which enabled Christians to be faithful even unto death, and a contrary one embraced, which augments prodigiously the number of these heroic sufferers. Here, no doubt, it will be wise to avoid both these extremes, and to hold the middle path, which certainly leads nearest to the truth. The martyrs were less in number than several of the ancient and modern writers have supposed them to be; but much more numerous than Dodwell and his followers are willing to believe. And this medium will be easily admitted by such as have learned from the ancient writers, that, in the darkest and most calamitous times of the church, all Christians were not equally, nor promiscuously disturbed, nor called before the public tribunals. Those who were of the lowest rank of the people, escaped the best; their obscurity, in some measure skreened them from the fury of persecution. The learned and eloquent, the doctors and ministers, and chiefly the rich, after the confiscation of whose fortunes a rapacious magistracy were perpetually gaping, these were the persons the most exposed to the dangers of the times.

XII.

[*s*] See Dodwell's dissertation, *De paucitate martyrum*, in his *Dissertationes Cyprianicæ*.

XII. The actions and sayings of these holy martyrs, from the moment of their imprisonment to their last gasp, were carefully recorded, in order to be read on certain days, and thus proposed as models to future ages. But few, however, of these ancient acts are come down to our times [*t*]; the greatest part of them having been destroyed during that dreadful persecution which Diocletian carried on ten years with such fury against the Christians. For a most diligent search was then made after all their books and papers; and all of them that were found were committed to the flames. From the eighth century downwards, several Greek and Latin writers endeavoured to make up this loss, by compiling, with vast labour, accounts of the lives and actions of the ancient martyrs. But the most of them have given us little else than a series of fables, adorned with profusion of rhetorical flowers, and striking images, as the wiser, even among the Romish doctors, frankly acknowledge. Nor are those records, that pass under the name of *martyrology*, worthy of superior credit, since they bear the most evident marks both of ignorance and falsehood. So that, upon the whole, this part of Ecclesiastical History, for want of ancient and authentic monuments, is extremely imperfect, and necessarily attended with much obscurity.

Their lives and actions.

XIII. It would have been surprising, if under such a monster of cruelty as Nero, the Christians had enjoyed the sweets of tranquillity and freedom. But this was far from being the case, for this perfidious tyrant accused them of having set fire to the city of *Rome*, that horrid crime, which he

Their persecution under Nero.

[*t*] Such of those acts as are worthy of credit have been collected by the learned Ruinartus, into one volume in folio, of a moderate size, entitled, *Selecta et sincera martyrum acta*, Amstelod. 1713. The hypothesis of Dodwell is amply refuted in a laboured preface which the author has prefixed to this work.

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he himself had committed with a barbarous pleasure. In avenging this crime upon the innocent Christians, he ordered matters so, that the punishment should bear some resemblance to the offence. He, therefore, wrapped up some of them in combustible garments, and ordered fire to be set to them when the darkness came on, that thus, like torches, they might dispel the obscurity of the night; while others were fastened to crosses, or torn to pieces by wild beasts, or put to death in some such dreadful manner. This horrid persecution was set on foot in the month of *November* [*u*], in the 64th year of Christ, and in it, according to some ancient accounts, St. Paul and St. Peter suffered martyrdom; though this latter fact is contested by many, as being absolutely irreconcileable with chronology [*w*]. The death of Nero, who perished miserably in the year 68, put an end to the calamities of this first persecution, under which, during the space of four years, the Christians suffered every sort of torment and affliction, which the ingenious cruelty of their enemies could invent.

The extent of this persecution.

XIV. Learned men are not entirely agreed concerning the extent of this persecution under Nero. Some confine it to the city of *Rome*, while others represent it as having raged throughout the whole empire. The latter opinion, which is also the most ancient [*x*], is undoubtedly to be preferred; as

[*u*] See, for a further illustration of this point of chronology, two French Dissertations of the very learned Alphonse de Vignoles, concerning the cause, and the commencement of the persecution under Nero, which are printed in Masson's *Histoire critique de la republique des lettres*, tom. viii. p. 74—117. tom. ix. p. 172—186. See also Toinard. *Ad Lactantium de mortibus persequut.* p. 398.

[*w*] See Tillemont, *Histoire des empereurs*, tom. i. p. 564. Baratier, *De successione Romanor. Pontif.* cap. v. p. 60.

[*x*] This opinion was first defended by Franc. Balduin, in his *Comm. ad edicta imperator, in Christianos*, p. 27, 28. After

as it is certain, that the laws enacted against the Christians, were enacted against the whole body, and not against particular churches, and were consequently in force in the remotest provinces. The authority of Tertullian confirms this, who tells us, that Nero and Domitian had enacted laws against the Christians, of which Trajan had in part, taken away the force, and rendered them, in some measure without effect [*y*]. We shall not have recourse for a further confirmation of this opinion, to that famous Portuguese or Spanish inscription, in which Nero is praised for having *purged that province from the new superstition;* since that inscription is justly suspected to be a mere forgery, and the best Spanish authors consider it as such [*z*]. But we may, however, make one observation, which will tend to illustrate the point in question, and that is, that, since the Christians

After him Launoius maintained the same opinion in his *Dissert. quâ Sulpitii Severi locus de prima martyrum Galliæ epocha vindicatur*, sect. i. p. 139, 140. tom. ii. part. i. *opp.* This opinion, however, is still more acutely and learnedly defended by Dodwell in the xith of his *Dissertationes Cyprianicæ.*

[*y*] *Apologet.* cap. iv. p. 46. according to the edition of Havercamp.

[*z*] This celebrated inscription is published by the learned Gruterus, in the first volume of his Inscriptions, p. ccxxxviii. n. 9. It must, however, be observed, that the best Spanish writers dare not venture to defend the genuineness and authority of this inscription, as it has not been seen by any of them, and was first produced by Cyriac of Ancona, a person universally known to be utterly unworthy of the least credit. We shall add here the judgment which the excellent historian of Spain, Jo. de Ferreras, has given of this inscription, in his *Histoire générale d'Espagne*, tom. i. p. 192. "Je ne puis "m'empêcher, (says he) d'observer que Cyriac d'Ancone "fut le premier qui publia cette inscription, et que c'est de "lui que les autres l'ont tirée; mais comme la foi de cet "Ecrivain est suspect au jugement de tous les savans, que "d'ailluers il n'y a ni vestige, ni souvenir de cette inscription "dans les places où l'on dit qu'elle s'est trouvée, et qu'on ne "scait où la prendre à present, chacun peut en porter le juge-"ment qu'il voudra."

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tians were condemned by Nero, not so much on account of their religion, as for the falsely-imputed crime of burning the city [*a*], it is scarcely to be imagined, that he would leave unmolested even beyond the bounds of *Rome*, a sect whose members were accused of such an abominable deed.

The persecution under Domitian.

XV. Though immediately after the death of Nero, the rage of this first persecution against the Christians ceased, yet the flame broke out anew in the year ninety-three or ninety-four, under Domitian, a prince little inferior to Nero in all sorts of wickedness [*b*]. This persecution was occasioned, if we may give credit to Hegesippus, by the fears that Domitian was under of losing the empire [*c*]: for he had been informed that, among the relations of Christ, a man should arise, who, possessed of a turbulent and ambitious spirit, was to excite commotions in the state, and aim at supreme dominion. However that may have been, the persecution renewed by this unworthy prince was extremely violent, though his untimely death put a stop to it, not long after it commenced. Flavius Clemens, a man of consular dignity, and Flavia Domitilla, his niece, or, as some say, his wife, were the principal martyrs that suffered in this persecution, in which also the apostle John was banished to the isle of *Patmos*. Tertullian, and other writers inform us, that, before his banishment, he was thrown into a caldron of boiling oil, from whence he came forth, not only living, but even unhurt. This story, however, is not attested in such a manner as to leave no remaining doubt about its certainty [*d*].

PART

[*a*] See Theod. Ruinart. *Præf. ad acta martyrum sincera et selecta*, f. 31, &c.

[*b*] Idem *Præf. ad acta martyrum*, &c. f. 33. Thom. Ittigius, *Selectis Histor. Eccl. Capit.* Sæc. i. cap. vi. sect. 11. p. 331.

[*c*] Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* lib. iii. cap. xix. xx.

[*d*] See Mosheim's *Syntagma dissert. ad historiam eccles. pertinentium*. p. 497—546.

PART II.

The INTERNAL HISTORY of the CHURCH.

CHAPTER I.

Containing an account of the state of LEARNING *and* PHILOSOPHY.

I. IF we had any certain or satisfactory account of the doctrines which were received among the wiser of the eastern nations, when the light of the gospel first rose upon the world, this would contribute to illustrate many important points in the ancient history of the church. But the case is quite otherwise: the fragments of the ancient oriental philosophy that are come down to us, are, as every one knows, few in number, and, such as they are, they yet require the diligence, erudition, and sagacity of some learned man, to collect them into a body, to arrange them with method, and to explain them with perspicuity [*e*].

The state of philosophy in the east not sufficiently known.

II. The doctrine of the *magi*, who believed the universe to be governed by *two principles*, the one good, and the other evil, flourished in *Persia*. Their followers, however, were not all agreed concerning

The philosophy of the Persians, Chaldeans, and Arabians.

[*e*] The history of the oriental philosophy by Mr. Stanley, though it is not void of all kind of merit, is yet extremely defective. That learned author is so far from having exhausted his subject, that he has left it, on the contrary, in many places wholly untouched. The history of philosophy, published in Germany, by the very learned Mr. Brucker, is vastly preferable to Mr. Stanley's work; and the German author, indeed, much superior to the English one, both in point of genius and of erudition.

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cerning the nature of these principles [*f*]; but this did not prevent the propagation of the main doctrine, which was received throughout a considerable part of *Asia* and *Africa*, especially among the Chaldeans, Assyrians, Syrians, and Egyptians, though with different modifications, and had even infected the Jews themselves [*g*]. The Arabians at that time, and even afterwards were more remarkable for strength and courage, than for genius and sagacity; nor do they seem, according to their own confession [*h*], to have acquired any great reputation for wisdom and philosophy before the time of Mahomet.

The wisdom of the Indians and Egyptians.

III. From the earliest times, the Indians were distinguished by their taste for sublime knowledge and wisdom. We might, perhaps, be able to form a judgment of their philosophical tenets, if that most ancient book, which they looked upon as particularly sacred, and which they call *veda*, or the law, were brought to light, and translated into some known language. But the accounts which are given of this remarkable book, by those who have been in the *Indies*, are so various and irreconcileable with each other, that we must yet wait for further satisfaction on this head [*i*]. As to the Egyptians, they were divided,

[*f*] See Hyde's *History of the religion of the Ancient Persians*, a work full of erudition and disorder, and interspersed with conjectures of the most improbable kind.

[*g*] See a treatise of Jo. Christoph. Wolf, published at *Hamburgh*, in 1707, under the title of *Manichæismus ante Manichæos*. See also Mosheim's *Observations upon* Cudworth's *Intellectual System of the Universe*, p. 328. 423.

[*h*] See Abulpharaius, *De Moribus Arabum*, published by Pocock.

[*i*] I have lately heard that this most important, and long-expected book has been acquired by some French Jesuits, who are missionaries in the Indies, and who have sent it over to the king of France's library. It is also said, that it is already translated, or will be so immediately. See *Lettre du P. Calmette*

divided, as every one knows, into a multitude of sects and opinions [*k*]; so that their labour seems exceeding fruitless, who endeavour to reduce the philosophy of this people to one system.

The oriental philosophy properly so called.

IV. But of all the different systems of philosophy that were received in *Asia* and *Africa* about the time of our Saviour, none was so detrimental to the Christian religion as that which was styled *gnosis*, or science, i. e. *the way to the true knowledge of the Deity*, and which we have above called the *oriental doctrine*, in order to distinguish it from the Grecian philosophy. It was from the bosom of this pretended oriental wisdom, that the chiefs of those sects, which, in the three first centuries, perplexed and afflicted the Christian church, originally issued forth. These supercilious doctors, endeavouring to accommodate to the tenets of their fantastic philosophy, the pure, the simple, and sublime doctrines of the Son of God, brought forth, as the result of this jarring composition, a multitude of idle dreams and fictions, and imposed upon their followers a system of opinions, which were partly ludicrous, and partly perplexed with intricate subtilties, and covered over with impenetrable obscurity. The ancient doctors, both Greek and Latin, who opposed these sects, considered them as so many branches that derived their origin from the Platonic philosophy. But this was pure illusion: An apparent resemblance between certain opinions of Plato, and some of the tenets of the eastern schools, deceived these good men, who had no knowledge but of the Grecian philosophy, and were absolutely ignorant of the oriental doctrines. Whoever com-

 pares

Calmette à M. de Cartigny, dans les Lettres edifiantes et curieuses des Missions Etrangeres, xxi. *Recueil* p. 455. as also *Recueil* xxiii. p. 161.

[*k*] See Mosheim's *Observations on the Intellectual System*, &c. in his Latin translation of that work, tom. i. p. 415.

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pares the platonic and gnostic philosophy together, will easily perceive the wide difference that there is between them.

The first principles of this philosophy.

V. The first principles of the oriental philosophy seem perfectly consistent with the dictates of reason; for its first founder must undoubtedly have argued in the following manner: "There "are many evils in this world, and men seem "impelled by a natural instinct to the practice "of those things which reason condemns; but "that eternal mind from which all spirits derive "their existence, must be inaccessible to all kinds "of evil, and also of a most perfect and benefi- "cent nature; therefore the origin of those evils, "with which the universe abounds, must be "sought somewhere else than in the Deity. It "cannot reside in him who is all perfection; and "therefore it must be *without* him. Now, there "is nothing *without*, or *beyond* the Deity, but "*matter*; therefore *matter* is the centre and source "of all evil, of all vice." Having taken for granted these principles, they proceeded further, and affirmed, that matter was eternal, and derived its present form, not from the will of the Supreme God, but from the creating power of some inferior intelligence, to whom the world and its inhabitants owed their existence. As a proof of this assertion, they alleged, that it was incredible, that the supreme Deity, perfectly good, and infinitely removed from all evil, should either create or modify matter, which is essentially malignant and corrupt, or bestow upon it, in any degree, the riches of his wisdom and liberality. They were, however, aware of the insuperable difficulties that lay against their system; for when they were called to explain, in an accurate and satisfactory manner, how this rude and corrupt matter came to be arranged into such a regular and harmonious frame as that of

of the universe, and, particularly, how celestial spirits were joined to bodies formed out of its malignant mass, they were sadly embarrassed, and found, that the plainest dictates of reason declared, their system incapable of defence. In this perplexity they had recourse to wild fictions and romantic fables, in order to give an account of the formation of the world, and the origin of mankind.

The oriental philosophers divided in their sentiments.

VI. Those who, by mere dint of fancy and invention, endeavour to cast a light upon obscure points, or to solve great and intricate difficulties, are seldom agreed about the methods of proceeding; and, by a necessary consequence, separate into different sects. Such was the case of the oriental philosophers, when they set themselves to explain the difficulties mentioned above. Some imagined *two eternal principles* from whence all things proceeded, the one presiding over *light*, and the other over *matter;* and by their perpetual conflict, explained the mixture of good and evil that appears in the universe. Others maintained that the being which presided over matter, was not an eternal principle, but a subordinate intelligence, one of those whom the Supreme God, produced from himself. They supposed that this being was moved by a sudden impulse, to reduce to order the rude mass of matter, which lay excluded from the mansions of the Deity, and also to create the human race. A third sort fell upon a system different from the two preceding, and formed to themselves the notion of a *triumvirate* of beings in which the *Supreme Deity* was distinguished both from the *material, evil principle,* and from the *creator* of this sublunary world. These, then, were the three leading sects of the oriental philosophy, which were subdivided into various factions, by the disputes that arose when they came to explain more fully their re-

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spective opinions and to pursue them into all their monstrous consequences. These multiplied divisions were the natural and necessary consequences of a system which had no solid foundation, and was no more indeed than an airy phantom, blown up by the wanton fancies of self-sufficient men. And that these divisions did really subsist, the history of the Christian sects that embraced this philosophy abundantly testifies.

Their opinions concerning the Deity.

VII. It is, however, to be observed, that, as all these sects were founded upon one common principle, their divisions did not prevent their holding, in common, certain opinions concerning the Deity, the universe, the human race, and several other subjects. They were all, therefore, unanimous in acknowledging the existence of an eternal nature, in whom dwelt the fulness of wisdom, goodness, and all other perfections, and of whom no mortal was able to form a complete idea. This great being was considered by them as a most pure and radiant *light*, diffused through the immensity of space, which they called *pleroma*, a Greek word, which signifies fulness; and they taught concerning him, and his operations, the following things; "The *eternal nature*, infinitely "perfect, and infinitely happy, having dwelt "from everlasting in a profound solitude, and in "a blessed tranquillity, produced, at length, from "*itself*, two minds of a different sex, which re-"sembled their supreme parent in the most per-"fect manner. From the prolific union of "these two beings others arose, which were also "followed by succeeding generations; so that "in process of time, a celestial family was formed "in the *pleroma* [*l*]. This divine progeny, being "immu-

☞ [*l*] It appears highly probable, that the apostle Paul had an eye to this fantastic mythology, when, in the first chapter of his *First Epistle to Timothy*, ver. 4. he exhorts him not

" immutable in its nature, and above the power " of mortality, was called, by the philosophers, " *æon* [*m*]," a term which signifies, in the Greek language, an eternal nature. How many in number these *æons* were, was a point much controverted among the oriental sages.

VIII.

not to *give heed to fables and endless* genealogies, *which minister questions*, &c.

☞ [*m*] The word αἰὼν, or *æon*, is commonly used by the Greek writers, but in different senses. Its signification in the Gnostic system is not extremely evident, and several learned men have despaired of finding out its true meaning. Αἰὼν, or *æon*, among the ancients, was used to signify the age of man, or the duration of human life. In after times, it was employed by philosophers to express the duration of spiritual and invisible beings. These philosophers used the word χρόνος, as the measure of corporeal and changing objects; and ἀΐων, as the measure of such as were immutable and eternal. And as God is the chief of those immutable beings which are spiritual, and consequently, not to be perceived by our outward senses, his infinite and eternal duration was expressed by the term αἰὼν, or *æon*, and that is the sense in which that word is now commonly understood. It was, however, afterwards attributed to other spiritual and invisible beings; and the oriental philosophers, who lived about the time of Christ's appearance upon earth, and made use of the Greek language, understood by it the *duration* of eternal and immutable things, the *space*, or period of time in which they exist. Nor did the variations, through which this word passed, end here; from expressing only the *duration* of beings, it was, by a *metonomy*, employed to signify the beings themselves. Thus the Supreme Being was called ἀΐων, or *æon*, and the angels distinguished also by the title of *æons*. All this will lead us to the true meaning of that word among the Gnostics. They had formed to themselves the notion of an invisible and spiritual world, composed of *entities*, or *virtues*, proceeding from the Supreme Being, and succeeding each other at certain intervals of time, so as to form an eternal *chain*, of which our world was the terminating link; a notion of eternity very different from that of the Platonists, who represented it as stable, permanent, and void of succession. To the beings that formed this eternal chain, the Gnostics assigned a certain term of duration, and a certain sphere of action. Their *terms of duration* were, at first, called αἰῶνες, and they themselves were afterwards *metonimically* distinguished by that title.

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Concerning the origin of this world.

VIII. "Beyond the mansions of *light*, where "dwells the *Deity* with his celestial offspring, "there lies a rude and unwieldy mass of *matter*, "agitated by innate, turbulent, and irregular "motions. One of the celestial natures descend- "ing from the *pleroma*, either by a fortuitous "impulse, or in consequence of a divine com- "mission, reduced to order this unseemly mass, "adorned it with a rich variety of gifts, created "men, and inferior animals of different kinds, to "store it with inhabitants, and corrected its ma- "lignity by mixing with it a certain portion of "light, and also of a matter celestial and divine. "This creator of the world is distinguished from "the Supreme Deity by the name of *demiurge*. "His character is a compound of shining quali- "ties, and insupportable arrogance; and his ex- "cessive lust of empire effaces his talents and his "virtues. He claims dominion over the new "world he has formed, as his sovereign right; "and excluding totally the Supreme Deity "from all concernment in it, he demands from "mankind, for himself and his associates, divine "honours."

Concerning the state and destination of human souls.

IX. "Man is a compound of a terrestrial "and corrupt body, and a soul which is of "celestial origin, and, in some measure, an "emanation from the divinity. This nobler "part is miserably weighed down and encum- "bered by the body, which is the seat of all "irregular lusts and impure desires. It is this "body that seduces the soul from the pursuit of "truth, and not only turns it from the contem- "plation and worship of the Supreme Being, so "as to confine its homage and veneration to the "Creator of this world, but also attaches it to "terrestrial objects, and to the immoderate pur- "suit of sensual pleasures, by which its nature "is totally polluted. The sovereign mind em-

"ploys

" ploys various means to deliver his offspring " from this deplorable servitude, especially the " ministry of divine messengers, whom he sends " to enlighten, to admonish, and to reform the " human race. In the mean time, the imperious " *demiurge* exerts his power in opposition to the " merciful purpose of the Supreme Being, resists " the influence of those solemn invitations by " which he exhorts mankind to return to him, " and labours to efface the knowledge of God " in the minds of intelligent beings. In this con- " flict, such souls, as, throwing off the yoke of " the creators and rulers of this world, rise to " their Supreme Parent, and subdue the turbu- " lent and sinful motions, which corrupt *matter* " excites within them, shall, at the dissolution " of their mortal bodies, ascend directly to the " *pleroma*. Those, on the contrary, who remain " in the bondage of servile superstition, and cor- " rupt matter, shall, at the end of this life, pass " into new bodies, until they awake from their " sinful lethargy. In the end, however, the " Supreme God shall come forth victorious, tri- " umph over all opposition, and, having delivered " from their servitude the greatest part of those " souls that are imprisoned in mortal bodies, shall " dissolve the frame of this visible world, and in- " volve it in a general ruin. After this solemn " period, primitive tranquillity shall be restored in " the universe, and God shall reign with happy " spirits, in undisturbed felicity, through the ever- " lasting ages."

Of the Jewish philosophy.

X. Such were the principal tenets of the oriental philosophy. The state of letters and philosophy among the Jews comes next under consideration; and of this we may form some idea from what has been said already concerning that nation. It is chiefly to be observed, that the dark

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dark and hidden science, which they called the *kabbala*, was at this time taught and inculcated by many among that superstitious people [*n*]. This science, in many things, bears a strong resemblance to the oriental philosophy; or, to speak more accurately, it is indeed that same philosophy accommodated to the Jewish religion, and tempered with a certain mixture of truth. Nor were the doctrines of the Grecian sages unknown to the Jews at the period now before us; since, from the time of Alexander the Great, some of them had been admitted, even into the Mosaic religion. We shall say nothing concerning the opinions which they adopted from the philosophical and theological systems of the Chaldeans, Egyptians, and Syrians [*o*].

The state of learning in Greece.

XI. The Greeks, in the opinion of most writers, were yet in possession of the first rank among the nations that cultivated letters and philosophy. In many places, and especially at *Athens*, there were a considerable number of men distinguished by their learning, acuteness, and eloquence; philosophers of all sects, who taught the doctrines of Plato, Aristotle, Zeno, and Epicurus; rhetoricians also, and men of genius, who instructed the youth in the rules of eloquence, and formed their taste for the liberal arts. So that those who had a passion for the study of oratory, resorted in multitudes to the Grecian schools, in order to perfect themselves in that noble science. *Alexandria*, in *Egypt*, was also much

[*n*] See Jo. Franc. Buddei *Introductio in Historiam Philos. Hebræorum;* as also the authors which B. Wolf mentions, with encomiums, in his *Bibliotheca Hebraica*, tom. iii.

[*o*] See Jo. Franc. Buddei *Introductio in Historiam Philos. Hebræorum;* as also the authors, recommended by Wolf, in his *Bibliotheca Hebraica*, tom. iii.

much frequented for the same purpose, as a great number of the Grecian philosophers and rhetoricians dwelt in that city.

At Rome.

XII. The Romans also at this time, made a shining figure among the polished and learned nations. All the sciences flourished at *Rome*. The youth of a higher rank were early instructed in the Greek language and eloquence. From thence they proceeded to the study of philosophy, and the laws of their country; and they finished their education by a voyage into *Greece*, where they not only gave the last degree of perfection to their philosophical studies, but also acquired that refined wit and eloquence of taste, that served to set off their more solid attainments in the most advantageous manner [*p*]. None of the philosophical sects were more in vogue among the Romans than the Epicureans and the Academics, which were peculiarly favoured by the great, who, soothed by their doctrines into a false security, indulged their passions without remorse, and continued in their vicious pursuits, without terror. During the reign of Augustus, the culture of polite learning and of the fine arts, was held in great honour, and those that contributed with zeal and success to this, were eminently distinguished by that prince. But after his death, learning languished without encouragement, and was neglected, because the succeeding emperors were more intent upon the arts of war and rapine, than those more amiable arts and inventions that are the fruits of leisure and peace.

In the other nations.

XIII. With respect to the other nations, such as the Germans, Celts, and Bretons, it is certain, that they were not destitute of learned and ingenious

[*p*] See Paganani Gaudentii *Liber de Philosophiæ apud Romanos initio et progressu, in* Tertio Fasciculo *Novæ Collectionis Variorum Scriptorum.* Halæ, 1717.

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nious men. Among the Gauls, the people of *Marseilles* had long acquired a shining reputation for their progress in the sciences [*q*]; and there is no doubt, but that the neighbouring countries received the benefit of their instructions. Among the Celts, their druids, priests, philosophers, and legislators were highly remarkable for their wisdom; but their writings, at least such as are yet extant, are not sufficient to inform us of the nature of their philosophy [*r*]. The Romans, indeed, introduced letters and philosophy into all the provinces which submitted to their victorious arms, in order to soften the rough manners of the savage nations, and form in them imperceptibly, the sentiments and feelings of humanity [*s*].

CHAP. II.

Concerning the Doctors and Ministers of the Church, and its form of government.

The necessity of public teachers.

I. THE great end of Christ's mission was to form an universal church, gathered out of all the nations of the world, and to extend the limits of this great society from age to age. But, in order to this, it was necessary, first, to appoint *extraordinary teachers*, who, converting the Jews and Gentiles to the truth, should erect every where, Christian assemblies; and then, to establish *ordinary ministers*, and interpreters of the divine

[*q*] See the *Histoire Literaire de la France par des Religieux Benedictins.* Dissert. Prelim. p. 42. &c.

[*r*] Jac. Martin, *Religion des Gaulois,* livr. i. cap. xxi. p. 175.

[*s*] Juvenal, Satir. xv. ver. 110.

" Nunc totus Graias notrasque habet orbis Athenas,
" Gallia caussidicos docuit facunda Britannos,
" De conducendo loquitur jam Rhetore Thule."

divine will, who should enforce, and repeat the doctrines delivered by the former, and maintain the people in their holy profession, and in the practice of the Christian virtues. For the best system of religion must necessarily either dwindle to nothing or be egregiously corrupted, if it is not perpetually inculcated and explained by a regular and standing ministry.

Extraordinary teachers.

II. The *extraordinary* teachers, whom Christ employed to lay the foundations of his everlasting kingdom, were the twelve apostles, and the seventy disciples, of whom mention has been made above. To these the Evangelists are to be added, by which title those were distinguished whom the apostles sent to instruct the nations, or who, of their own accord, abandoned every worldly attachment, and consecrated themselves to the sacred office of propagating the gospel [*t*]. In this rank, also, we must place those, to whom, in the infancy of the church, the marvellous power of speaking in foreign languages which they had never learned, was communicated from above. For the person to whom the divine omnipotence and liberality had imparted the gift of tongues, might conclude, with the utmost assurance, from the gift itself, (which a wise being would not bestow in vain,) that he was appointed by God to minister unto the truth, and to employ his talents in the service of Christianity [*u*].

The authority of the apostles.

III. Many have undertaken to write the history of the apostles [*w*], a history which we find loaded with fables, doubts, and difficulties, when we

[*t*] See St. Paul's *Epistle to the Ephesians*, iv. 11. As also Euseb. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. iii. cap. xxxvii.

[*u*] 1 Cor. xiv. 22.

[*w*] The authors who have written concerning the apostles, are enumerated by Sagittarius in his *Introduction to Ecclesiastical History*, ch. i. p. 2. and also by Buddæus, in his treatise, *De Ecclesia Apostolica*, p. 674.

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we pursue it further than the books of the New-Testament, and the most ancient writers in the Christian church. In order to have a just idea of the nature, privileges, and authority of the apostolic function, we must consider an apostle as a person who was honoured with a divine commission, invested with the power of *making laws*, of *controlling and restraining the wicked*, when that was expedient, and of *working miracles*, when necessary; and sent to mankind, *to unfold to them the divine will, to open to them the paths of salvation and immortality, and to separate from the multitude, and unite in the bonds of one sacred society, those who were attentive and obedient to the voice of God addressed to men by their ministry* [*x*].

The LXX. disciples.

IV. The accounts we have of the seventy disciples are still more obscure than those of the apostles; since the former are only once mentioned in the New Testament, (Luke x. 1.) The illustrations that we have yet remaining, relative to their character and office, are certainly composed by the more modern Greeks, and, therefore, can have but little authority or credit [*y*]. Their commission extended no further than the Jewish nation, as appears from the express words of St. Luke; though it is highly probable, that, after Christ's ascension they performed the functions of Evangelists, and declared the glad tidings of salvation, and the

[*x*] See Fred. Spanheim, *De apostolis et apostolatu*, tom. ii. *opp.* p. 289. It is not without weighty reasons, and without having considered the matter attentively, that I have supposed the apostles invested with the power of *enacting laws*. I am sensible that some very learned men among the moderns have denied this power, but I apprehend they differ from me rather in words than in any thing else.

[*y*] These accounts are to be seen at the end of three books concerning the life and death of Moses, which were discovered and illustrated by Gilb. Gaulminus, and republished by Jo. Albert Fabricius, in his *Biblioth. Græc.* p. 474.

the means of obtaining it, through different nations and provinces.

V. Neither Christ himself nor his holy apostles, have commanded any thing clearly or expressly concerning the external form of the church, and the precise method, according to which it should be governed [z]. From this we may

The external form of the church not determined by Christ.

☞ [z] Those who imagine, that Christ himself, or the apostles, by his direction and authority, appointed a certain fixed form of church-government, are not agreed what that form was. The principal opinions that have been adopted upon this head may be reduced to the four following: The first is that of the Roman Catholics, who maintain, "That "Christ's intention and appointment was, that his follow-"ers should be collected into one sacred empire, subjected to "the government of St. Peter and his successors, and divided, "like the kingdoms of this world, into several provinces; "that in consequence thereof, Peter fixed the seat of "ecclesiastical dominion at *Rome*, but afterwards to alleviate "the burthen of his office, divided the church into three "greater provinces, according to the division of the world at "that time, and appointed a person to preside in each, who "was dignified with the title of *patriarch*; that the European "patriarch resided at *Rome*, the Asiatic at *Antioch*, and the "African at *Alexandria*; that the bishops of each province, "among whom also there were various ranks, were to re-"verence the authority of their respective patriarchs, and "that both bishops and patriarchs were to be passively sub-"ject to the supreme dominion of the Roman Pontiff*." This romantic account scarcely deserves a serious refutation. The second opinion concerning the government of the church, makes no mention of a *supreme head*, or of *patriarchs*, constituted by divine authority, but supposes that the apostles divided the Roman empire into as many ecclesiastical provinces as there were secular, or civil ones; that the *metropolitan* bishop, *i. e.* the prelate, who resided in the capital city of each province, presided over the clergy of that province, and that the other bishops were subject to his authority. This opinion has been adopted by some of the most learned of the Romish church †, and has also been favoured

* See Leon Allatius, De perpetua concens. Eccles. Orient. et Occident, lib. i. cap. ii. Morinus, Exercitat. Ecclesiast. lib. i. Exer. i.

† Petrus De Marca, De concord. sacerdot. et imperii, lib. vi. cap. i. Morinus, Exer. Eccl. lib. i. Ex. xviii. Pagi Critica in annal. Baronii ad A. xxxvii. tom. i. p. 29.

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may infer, that the regulation of this was, in some measure, to be accommodated to the time, and

favoured by some of the most eminent British divines ‡. Some Protestant writers of note have endeavoured to prove that it is not supported by sufficient evidence §. The *third* opinion is, that of those who acknowledge, that, when the Christians began to multiply exceedingly, *metropolitans, patriarchs,* and *archbishops* were indeed created, but only by *human* appointment and authority; though they confess, at the same time, that it is consonant to the orders and intention of Christ and his apostles, that, in every Christian church, there should be one person invested with the highest authority, and clothed with certain rights and privileges above the other doctors of that assembly. This opinion has been embraced by many English divines of the first rank in the learned world, and also by many in other countries and communions. The *fourth,* and last opinion is, that of the Presbyterians, who affirm, that Christ's intention was, that the Christian doctors and ministers should all enjoy the same rank and authority, without any sort of pre-eminence or subordination, any distinction of rights and privileges. The reader will find an ample account of these *four* different opinions with respect to church government in Dr. Mosheim's *Larger History of the first Century.* This learned and impartial writer, who condemns with reason the *fourth* opinion, as it is explained by those bigotted Puritans who look upon all subordination and variety of rank among the doctors of the church as condemnable and antichristian, observes, however, with equal reason, that this opinion may be explained and modified so, as to reconcile the moderate abetters of the episcopal discipline, with the less rigid Presbyterians. The opinion, modified by Dr. Mosheim, amounts to this: "That the Christian doctors are *equal* in this sense; "that Christ has left no positive and special decree which "constitutes a distinction among them, nor any *divine* com- "mandment by which those who, in consequence of the ap- "pointment of human wisdom, are in the higher ranks, can "demand, by divine right, the obedience and submission of "the inferior doctors, &c. their abstaining from the exercise "of certain functions," &c.

The truth of the matter is, that Christ, by leaving this matter undetermined, has, of consequence, left Christian societies a discretionary power of modelling the government of the

‡ Hammond, Diss. de Episcop. Beverege, Cod. Cannon. Vet. Eccles. Vindic. lib. ii. cap. v. tom. ii. Patr. Apost. Usser, De Origine Episcop. et Metropol. p. 20.

§ Basnage, Hist. de l'Eglise, tom. i. livr. i. cap. viii. Boehmer. Annot ad Petrum de Marca de concordia. sacerd et imperii, p. 143.

and left to the wisdom and prudence of the chief rulers, both of the state and of the church. If, however, it is true, that the apostles acted by divine inspiration, and in conformity with the commands of their blessed Master, (and this no Christian can call in question), then it follows, that that form of government which the primitive churches borrowed from that of *Jerusalem*, the first Christian assembly established by the apostles themselves, must be esteemed as of divine institution. But from this it would be wrong to conclude that such a form is immutable, and ought to be invariably observed; for this a great variety of events may render impossible. In those early times, every Christian church consisted of the *people*, their *leaders*, and the *ministers*, or *deacons*; and these, indeed, belong essentially to every religious society. The people were, undoubtedly, the first in authority; for the apostles shewed, by their own example, that nothing of moment was to be carried on or determined without the consent of the assembly [*a*], and such a method of proceeding was both prudent and necessary in those critical times.

The form of the first church at Jerusalem.

VI. It was, therefore, the assembly of the people, which chose their own rulers and teachers, or received them by a free and authoritative consent, when recommended by others. The same people rejected or confirmed by their suffrages, the laws that were proposed by their rulers to the assembly; excommunicated profligate and unworthy members of the church, restored the penitent to their forfeited privileges,

The right of the people.

the church in such a manner, as the circumstantial reasons of times, places, &c. may require; and therefore, the wisest government of the church is the best and the most divine; and every Christian society has a right to make laws for itself, provided that these laws are consistent with charity and peace, and with the fundamental doctrines and principles of Christianity.

[*a*] Acts i. 15. vi. 3. xv. 4. xxi. 22.

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passed judgment upon the different subjects of controversy and dissension, that arose in their community; examined and decided the disputes which happened between the elders and deacons; and, in a word, exercised all that authority which belongs to such as are invested with the sovereign power.

Their oblations.

The people, indeed, had, in some measure, purchased these privileges, by administering to the support of their rulers, ministers, and poor, and by offering large and generous contributions, when the safety or interests of the community rendered them necessary. In these supplies, each one bore a part proportioned to his circumstances; and the various gifts which were thus brought into the public assemblies, were called *oblations*.

A perfect equality among the primitive Christians.

VII. There reigned among the members of the Christian church, however distinguished they were by worldly rank and titles, not only an amiable harmony, but also a perfect equality. This appeared by the *feasts of charity*, in which all were indiscriminately assembled; by the names of *brethren* and *sisters*, with which they mutually saluted each other; and by several circumstances of a like nature. Nor, in this first century, was the distinction made between Christians, of a more or less perfect order, which took place afterwards. Whoever acknowledged Christ as the Saviour of mankind, and made a solemn profession of his confidence in him, was immediately baptized and received into the church. But, in process of time, when the church began to flourish, and its members to increase, it was thought prudent and necessary to divide Christians into two orders, distinguished by the names of *believers* and *catechumens*. The former were those, who had been solemnly admitted into the church by baptism, and, in consequence thereof, were instructed in all the mysteries of religion, had

Believers and catechumens.

had access to all the parts of divine worship, and were authorised to vote in the ecclesiastical assemblies. The latter were such as had not yet been dedicated to God and Christ by baptism, and were, therefore, admitted neither to the public prayers, nor to the holy communion, nor to the ecclesiastical assemblies.

The rulers of the church.

VIII. The rulers of the church were called either *presbyters* [*b*], or *bishops*, which two titles are, in the New Testament, undoubtedly applied to the same order of men [*c*]. These were persons of eminent gravity, and such as had distinguished themselves by their superior sanctity and merit [*d*]. Their particular functions were not always the same; for while some of them confined their labours to the instruction of the people, others contributed in different ways to the edification of the church. Hence the distinction between *teaching* and *ruling presbyters* has been adopted by certain learned men. But if ever this distinction existed, which I neither affirm nor deny, it certainly did not continue long; since it is manifest that St. Paul requires, that all bishops or presbyters be qualified, and ready to teach and instruct [*e*].

Presbyters or bishops.

The prophets.

IX. Among the first professors of Christianity, there were but few men of learning; few, who

☞ [*b*] The word *Presbyter,* or elder, is taken from the Jewish institution, and signifies rather the venerable prudence and wisdom of old age, than age itself.

[*c*] Acts xx. 17, 28. Phil. i. 1. Tit. i. 5, 7. 1 Tim. iii. 1.

[*d*] 1 Tim. iii. 1. Tit. i. 5.

[*e*] 1 Tim. iii. 2, &c. See concerning the word *presbyter,* the illustrations given by the learned Vitringa, *De synagoga vetere,* lib. iii. part I. cap. i. p. 609; and by the venerable Jo. Bened. Carpzovius, in his *Exerc. in Epist. ad Hebræos ex Philone,* p. 499. As to the *presbyters* themselves, and the nature of their office, the reader will receive much satisfaction from the accounts that are given of that order by Budæus, *De Ecclesia Apostolica,* cap. vi. p. 719. and by the most learned Pfaffius, *De originibus juris eccles.* p. 49.

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had capacity enough to insinuate into the minds of a gross and ignorant multitude, the knowledge of divine things. God therefore, in his infinite wisdom, judged it necessary to raise up, in many churches, extraordinary teachers, who were to discourse in the public assemblies, upon the various points of the Christian doctrine, and to treat with the people, in the name of God, as guided by his direction, and clothed with his authority. Such were the *Prophets of the New Testament* [*f*], an order of men, whose commission is too much limited by the writers who confine it to the interpretation of the books of the Old Testament, and especially the prophecies [*g*]. For it is certain, that they, who claimed the rank of *Prophets*, were invested with the power of censuring publicly such as had been guilty of any irregularity. But, to prevent the abuses that designing men might make of this institution, by pretending to this extraordinary character, in order to execute unworthy ends, there were always present, in the public auditories, judges, divinely appointed, who, by certain and infallible marks, were able to distinguish the false prophets from the true. This order of *prophets* ceased, when the want of teachers, which gave rise to it, was abundantly supplied.

Deacons of the church at Jerusalem.

X. The church was, undoubtedly, provided from the beginning with inferior ministers or *deacons*. No society can be without its servants, and still less such societies as those of the first Christians were. And it appears, not only probable, but evident, that the *young men*, who carried

[*f*] Rom. xiii. 6. 1 Cor. xii. 28. xiv. 3, 29. and Eph. iv. 11.

[*g*] See Mosheim's Dissertation *De illis qui* Prophetæ *vocantur in Novo Fœdere*, which is to be found in the second volume of his *Syntagma Dissertationum ad Historiam Eccles. pertinentium.*

ried away the dead bodies of Ananias and Sapphira, were the subordinate ministers, or *deacons*, of the church of *Jerusalem*, who attended the apostles to execute their orders [*h*]. These first

[*h*] Acts v. 6, 10.

Those who may be surprised at my affirming, that the *young men* mentioned in the passages here referred to, were the *deacons*, or ministers of the church at *Jerusalem*, are desired to consider, that the words νεώτεροι, νεανίσκοι, i. e. *young men*, are not always used to determine the age of the persons to whom they are applied, but are frequently employed to point out their *offices*, or functions, both by the Greek and Latin writers. The same rule of interpretation, that diversifies the sense of the word *presbyter*, (which, as all know, signifies sometimes the *age* of a person, and, at other times, his *function*) is manifestly applicable to the word before us. As, therefore, by the title of *presbyters*, the heads, or rulers of a society are pointed out without any regard to their age; so by the term *young men*, we are often to understand *ministers*, or *servants*, because such are generally in the flower of youth. This interpretation may be confirmed by examples, which are not wanting, even in the New Testament. Christ himself seems to attribute this sense to the word νεώτερος, Luke xxii. 26. ὁ μενζων ἐν ὑμῖν. γενέσθω ὡς ὁ νεώτερος. Our Saviour explains the term μείζων, by the word ἡγούμενος, and it therefore signifies a *presbyter*, or ruler; he also substitutes, a little after, ὁ διακονῶν, in the place of νεώτερος, which confirms our interpretation in the most unanswerable manner. So that μείζων and νεώτερος, are not here indications of certain ages, but of certain functions, and the precept of Christ amounts to this: "He that performs the office of a presbyter or elder among "you, let him not think himself superior to the ministers, or "deacons." The passage of 1 Pet. v. 5. is still more express to our purpose: Ὁμοίως νεώτεροι, ὑποτάγητε τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις. It is evident from the preceding verses, that *presbyter* here is the name of an office, and points out a ruler, or teacher of the church, and that the term νεώτερος is also to be interpreted, not *young men* in point of age, but the *ministers*, or servants of the church. St. Peter, having solemnly exhorted the presbyters not to abuse the power that was committed to them, addresses his discourse to the ministers or *deacons* of the church: "But likewise, ye "younger, i. e. ministers and deacons, despise not the orders "of the presbyters or elders, but perform cheerfully whatsoever "they command you." In the same sense does St. Luke employ this term, Acts v. 6, 10. and his νεώτεροι and νεανίσκοι are undoubtedly,

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first *deacons* of the church, being chosen from among the Jews, who were born in *Palestine*, were suspected by the foreign Jews of partiality in distributing the offerings which were presented for the support of the poor [*i*]. To remedy, therefore, this disorder, seven other deacons were chosen, by order of the apostles, and employed in the service of that part of the church at *Jerusalem*, which was composed of the foreign Jews converted to Christianity. Of these new ministers, six were foreigners, as appears by their names; the seventh was chosen out of the Proselytes, of whom there were a certain number among the first Christians at *Jerusalem*, and to whom it was reasonable, that some regard should be shewn, in the election of the deacons, as well as to the foreign Jews. All the other Christian churches followed the example of that of *Jerusalem*, in whatever related to the choice and office of the deacons. Some, particularly the eastern churches, elected *deaconesses*, and chose, for that purpose, matrons or widows of eminent sanctity, who also ministered to the necessities of the poor, and performed several other offices, that tended to the maintenance of order and decency in the church [*k*].

Bishops.

XI. Such was the constitution of the Christian church in its infancy, when its assemblies were neither

doubtedly, the deacons of the church of *Jerusalem*, of whom the Greek Jews complain afterwards to the apostles, (Acts vi. 1, &c.) on account of the partial distribution of the alms. I might confirm this sense of the word *young men* by numberless citations from Greek and Roman writers, and a variety of authors sacred and profane; but this is not the proper place for demonstrations of this nature.

[*i*] Acts vi. 1, &c.

[*k*] For an ample account of the *deacons* and *deaconesses* of the primitive church, see Zeigler, *De diaconis et diaconissis*, cap. xix. p. 347. Basnagii *Annal. Polit. Eccles. ad. A.* xxxv. tom. i. p. 450. Bingham, *Orig. Eccles.* lib. ii. cap. xx.

neither numerous nor splendid. Three or four presbyters, men of remarkable piety and wisdom, ruled these small congregations in perfect harmony, nor did they stand in need of any president or superior to maintain concord and order where no dissensions were known. But the number of the presbyters and deacons increasing with that of the churches, and the sacred work of the ministry growing more painful and weighty, by a number of additional duties, these new circumstances required new regulations. It was then judged necessary, that one man of distinguished gravity and wisdom should preside in the council of presbyters, in order to distribute among his colleagues their several tasks, and to be a centre of union to the whole society. This person was, at first, styled the *angel* [*l*] of the church to which he belonged, but was afterward distinguished by the name of *bishop*, or inspector; a name borrowed from the Greek language, and expressing the principal part of the episcopal function, which was to inspect into, and superintend, the affairs of the church. It is highly probable that the church of *Jerusalem*, grown considerably numerous, and deprived of the ministry of the apostles, who were gone to instruct the other nations, was the first, which chose a president or bishop. And it is no less probable, that the other churches followed by degrees such a respectable example.

The nature of the episcopal dignity in this century.

XII. Let none, however, confound the bishops of this primitive and golden period of the church with those of whom we read in the following ages. For, though they were both distinguished by the same name, yet they differed extremely, and that in many respects. A bishop, during the first and second century, was a person who had the care of one

[*l*] Rev. ii. 3.

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one Christian assembly, which, at that time, was, generally speaking, small enough to be contained in a private house. In this assembly he acted, not so much with the authority of a *master*, as with the zeal and diligence of a faithful *servant*. He instructed the people, performed the several parts of divine worship, attended the sick, and inspected into the circumstances and supplies of the poor. He charged, indeed, the presbyters with the performance of those duties and services, which the multiplicity of his engagements rendered it impossible for him to fulfil; but had not the power to decide or enact any thing without the consent of the presbyters and people. And, though the episcopal office was both laborious and singularly dangerous, yet its revenues were extremely small, since the church had no certain income, but depended on the gifts, or *oblations* of the multitude, which were, no doubt, inconsiderable, and were, moreover, to be divided between the bishops, presbyters, deacons, and poor.

The origin of dioceses and chorepiscopi.

XIII. The power and jurisdiction of the bishops were not long confined to these narrow limits, but soon extended themselves, and that by the following means. The bishops, who lived in the cities, had, either by their own ministry, or that of their presbyters, erected new churches in the neighbouring towns and villages. These churches, continuing under the inspection and ministry of the bishops, by whose labours and counsels they had been engaged to embrace the gospel, grew imperceptibly into ecclesiastical provinces, which the Greeks afterwards called *dioceses*. But as the bishop of the city could not extend his labours and inspection to all these churches in the country and in the villages, so he appointed certain suffragans or deputies to govern and to instruct these new societies; and they

they were distinguished by the title of *chorepiscopi*, i. e. country bishops. This order held the middle rank between bishops and presbyters, being inferior to the former, and superior to the latter.

Whether councils and metropolitans are to be placed in the first century.

XIV. The churches, in those early times, were entirely independent; none of them subject to any foreign jurisdiction, but each one governed by its own rulers and its own laws. For, though the churches founded by the apostles had this particular difference shewn them, that they were consulted in difficult and doubtful cases; yet they had no juridical authority, no sort of supremacy over the others, nor the least right to enact laws for them. Nothing, on the contrary, is more evident than the perfect equality that reigned among the primitive churches; nor does there even appear in this first century, the smallest trace of that association of provincial churches, from which *councils* and *metropolitans* derive their origin. It was only in the second century that the custom of holding councils commenced in *Greece*, from whence it soon spread through the other provinces [*m*].

The principal writers, the apostles and their disciples.

XV. The principal place among the Christian doctors, and among those also, who by their writings were instrumental in the progress of the truth, is due to the apostles and certain of their disciples, who were set apart and inspired by God, to record the actions of Christ and his apostles. The

[*m*] The meeting of the church of *Jerusalem*, mentioned in the xvth chapter of the Acts, is commonly considered as the *first Christian council*. But this notion arises from a manifest abuse of the word *council*. That meeting was only of one church, and, if such a meeting be called a *council*, it will follow that there were innumerable councils in the primitive times. But every one knows, that a *council* is an assembly of deputies, or commissioners, sent from several churches associated by certain bonds in a general body, and therefore the supposition above mentioned falls to the ground.

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The writings of these holy men, which are comprehended in the books of the New Testament, are in the hands of all who profess themselves Christians. Those who are desirous of particular information with respect to the history of these sacred books, and the arguments which prove their divine authority, their genuineness, and purity, must consult the learned authors who have written professedly upon that matter [*n*].

The time when the canon was fixed.

XVI. The opinions, or rather the conjectures of the learned, concerning the time when the books of the New Testament were collected into one volume, as also about the authors of that collection, are extremely different. This important question is attended with great and almost insuperable difficulties to us in these latter times [*o*]. It is, however, sufficient for us to know, that, before the middle of the second century, the greatest part of the books of the New Testament were read in every Christian society throughout the world, and received as a divine rule of faith and manners. Hence it appears, that these sacred writings were carefully separated from several human compositions upon the same subject, either by some of the apostles themselves, who lived so long, or by their disciples and successors, who were spread abroad through all nations [*p*]. We are well assured [*q*], that the *four*

[*n*] For the history of the books of the New Testament, see particularly Jo. Alb. Fabricius, *Biblioth. Græc.* lib. iv. cap. v. p. 122—227. The same learned author has given an accurate list of the writers, who have defended the divinity of these sacred books, in his *Delectus Argumentorum et Syllabus Scriptorum pro verit. relig. Christianæ*, cap. xxvi. p. 502.

[*o*] See Jo. Ens, *Bibliotheca S. seu Diatriba de librorum N. T. Canone*, published at *Amsterdam* in 1710, as also Jo. Mill, *Prolegomen. ad Nov. Test.* sect. 1. p. 23.

[*p*] See Frickius, *De cura Veteris Ecclesia circa Canon.* cap. iii. p. 86.

[*q*] This is expressly affirmed by Eusebius, in the xxivth chapter of the third book of his *Ecclesiastical History*.

four gospels were collected during the life of St. John, and that the three first received the approbation of this divine apostle. And why may we not suppose that the other books of the New Testament were gathered together at the same time?

Apocryphal and spurious writings.

XVII. What renders this highly probable is, that the most urgent necessity required its being done. For, not long after Christ's ascension into heaven, several histories of his life and doctrines, full of pious frauds and fabulous wonders, were composed by persons whose intentions, perhaps, were not bad, but whose writings discovered the greatest superstition and ignorance. Nor was this all: productions appeared which were imposed upon the world by fraudulent men, as the writings of the holy apostles [*r*]. These apocryphal and spurious writings must have produced a sad confusion, and rendered both the history and the doctrine of Christ uncertain, had not the rulers of the church used all possible care and diligence in separating the books that were truly apostolical and divine from all that spurious trash, and conveying them down to posterity in one volume.

Clemens, bishop of Rome.

XVIII. The writer, whose fame surpassed that of all others in this century, the epistles excepted, was Clemens, bishop of *Rome*. The accounts which remain of his life, actions, and death, are for the most part uncertain [*s*]. *Two Epistles to the*

[*r*] Such of these writings as are yet extant have been carefully collected by the learned Fabricius, in his *Codex Apocryphus Novi Testamenti*, which work is published in two volumes. Many ingenious and learned observations have been made on these spurious books by the celebrated Beausobre, in his *Histoire Critique des dogmes de Manichée*, livr. ii. p. 337. &c.

[*s*] After Tillemont, Cotelerius, and Garbe have given some accounts of this great man. And all that has been

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the Corinthians [*t*], written in Greek, have been attributed to him, of which the *second* has been looked upon as spurious, and the *first* as genuine, by many learned writers [*u*]. But even this latter seems to have been corrupted and interpolated by some ignorant and presumptuous author, who appears to have been displeased at observing a defect of learning and genius in the writings of so great a man as Clemens [*w*].

The writing falsely attributed to him.

XIX. The learned are now unanimous in regarding the other writings which bear the name of Clemens, viz. *the Apostolic Canons, the Apostolic Constitutions, the Recognitions of* Clemens *and* Clementina [*x*], as spurious productions ascribed

been said concerning him by the best and most credible writers, has been collected by Rondinini, in the first of two books published at *Rome*, in the year 1706, under the following title, *Libri Duo de S. Clemente, Papa, et Martyre, ejusque Basilica in urbe Roma.*

[*t*] J. A. Fabricius, in the vth chapter of the fourth book of his *Bibliotheca, Græca*, mentions the editions that have been given of St. Clement's epistles. To this account we must add the edition published at *Cambridge*, in 1718, which is preferable to the preceding ones in many respects.

☞ [*u*] See the ample account that is given of these two Greek epistles of Clemens by the learned Dr. Lardner, in the first volume of the second part of his valuable work, entitled, *The Credibility of the Gospel History*, &c. &c.

[*w*] See J. Bapt. Cotelerii *Patres Apost.* tom. i. p. 133. and Bernardi *Adnotatiunculæ in Clementem*, in the last edition of these *fathers*, published by Le Clerc. The learned Wotton has endeavoured, though without success, in his observations on the epistles of Clemens, to refute the annotations above mentioned.

☞ [*x*] Besides these writings attributed to Clemens, we may reckon *two epistles* which the learned Wetstein found in a Syriac version of the New Testament, which he took the pains to translate from Syriac into Latin, and has subjoined both the original and the translation to his famous edition of the Greek Testament, published at *Amsterdam* in two volumes in folio, in the year 1751, and 1752. The title prefixed to these epistles is as follows: Duæ Epistolæ *S. Clementis Romani* Discipuli *Petri Apostoli*, quas ex Codice Manuscripto Novi Test. Syriaci nunc primum erutas, cum versione Latinâ adposita,

cribed by some impostor to this venerable prelate, in order to procure them a high degree of authority [y]. The *Apostolical Canons*, which consist of *eighty-five ecclesiastical laws*, contain a view of the church government and discipline received among the Greek and Oriental Christians in the second and third century. The *eight books of Apostolical Constitutions* are the work of some austere and melancholy author, who, having taken it into his head to reform the Christian worship, which he looked upon as degenerated from its original purity, made no scruple to prefix to his rules the names of the apostles, that thus they might be more speedily and favourably received [z]. The *Recognitions* of Clemens, which differ very little from the Clementina, are the witty and agreeable production of an Alexandrian Jew, well versed in philosophy. They were

adposita, edidit Jo. Jacobus Wetstenius. The manuscript of the Syriac version, from whence these epistles were taken, was procured by the good offices of Sir James Porter, a judicious patron of literature and men of letters, who, at that time was British ambassador at *Constantinople*. The authenticity of these epistles is boldly maintained by Wetstein, and learnedly opposed by Dr. Lardner, in a *Dissertation upon the two epistles ascribed to* Clement *of Rome, lately published by Mr.* Wetstein, &c. The celebrated Professor Venema of *Franeker,* suspected also the spuriousness of these epistles; see an account of his controversy with Wetstein on that subject, in the *Bibliothéque des Sciences et des Beaux Arts,* tom. ii. p. 51, &c. p. 311.

[y] For an account of the fate of these writings, and the editions that have been given of them, it will be proper to consult two Dissertations of the learned Ittigius; the one *De Patribus Apostolicis,* which he has prefixed to his *Bibliotheca Patrum Apostolicorum;* and the other, *De Pseudepigraphis Apostolicis* which he has subjoined to the Appendix of his book *De Hæresiarchis ævi Apostolici.* See also Fabricius' *Bibliotheca Græca,* lib. v. cap. i. p. 31, &c. and lib. vi. cap. i. p. 4.

[z] Budæus has collected the various opinions of the learned concerning the *Apostolical Canons and Constitutions in* his *Isagoge in Theologiam,* par. II. ch. v. p. 746.

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were written in the third century, with a design to answer, in a new manner, the objections of the Jews, Philosophers, and Gnostics, against the Christian religion; and the careful perusal of them will be extremely useful to such as are curious of information with respect to the state of the Christian church in the primitive times [*a*].

Ignatius, bishop of Antioch.

XX. Ignatius, bishop of *Antioch*, succeeds Clemens in the list of the *Apostolic Fathers*, among whom were placed such Christian doctors as had conversed with the apostles themselves, or their disciples. This pious and venerable man, who was the disciple and familiar friend of the apostles, was, by the order of Trajan, brought to *Rome*, and exposed to wild beasts in the public theatre, where he suffered martyrdom with the utmost constancy [*b*]. There are yet extant several epistles, attributed to him, concerning the authenticity of which there have been, however, tedious and warm disputes among the learned, which still subsist. Of these epistles, seven are said to have been written by this eminent martyr, during his journey from *Antioch* to *Rome;* and these the most learned of men acknowledge to be genuine, as they stand in the edition that was published in the last century, from a manuscript in the Medicean library. The others are generally rejected as spurious. As to my own sentiments of this matter, though I am willing to adopt this opinion as preferable to any other, yet I cannot help looking upon the authenticity

[*a*] See for a full account of this work, Mosheim's Dissertation, *De turbatâ per recentiores Platonicos Ecclesiâ*, sect. 34. p. 174. ☞ This Dissertation is in the first volume of that learned work which our author published some years ago, under the title of *Syntagma Dissertationum ad Historiam Ecclesiasticam pertinentium.*

[*b*] See Tillemont's *Memoires pour servir à l' Histoire de l' Eglise*, tom. ii. par. II. p. 42—80.

authenticity of the *Epistle to* Polycarp as extremely dubious, on account of the difference of style: and, indeed, the whole question, relating to the epistles of St. Ignatius in general, seems to me to labour under much obscurity, and to be embarrassed with many difficulties [*c*]. CENT. I. PART II.

XXI. The *Epistle to the Philippians*, which is ascribed to Polycarp bishop of *Smyrna*, who, in the middle of the second century, suffered martyrdom in a venerable and advanced age, is looked upon by some as genuine; by others as spurious; and it is no easy matter to determine this question [*d*]. The *Epistle of* Barnabas was the production of some Jew, who, most probably, lived in this century, and whose mean abilities and superstitious attachment to Jewish fables shew, notwithstanding the uprightness of his intentions, that he must have been a very different person from the true Barnabas, who was St. Paul's companion [*e*]. The work which is entitled, *The Shepherd of* Hermas, because the angel, who bears the principal part in it, is represented in the form and habit of a shepherd, was composed in the second century by Hermes, who was brother to Pius bishop of *Rome* [*f*]. This whimsical and visionary Polycarp. Barnabas.

[*c*] For an account of this controversy, concerning the genuineness of the epistles of Ignatius, it will be proper to consult the *Bibliotheca Græca, of* Fabricius, lib. v. cap. i. p. 38, —47.

[*d*] For an account of this martyr, and of the epistle attributed to him, see Tillemont's *Memoires,* &c. vol. ii. par. II. p. 287; as also Fabricii *Biblioth. Græca,* lib. v. cap. i. p. 47.

[*e*] See Tillemont's *Memoires,* &c. vol. i. par. III. p. 1043. Ittigius' *Select. Hist. Eccles. Capita.* sect. 1. cap. 1. sect. 14. p. 173, and lib. v. cap. i. sect. 4. p. 4.

[*f*] This now appears with the utmost evidence from a very ancient fragment of a small book, concerning the canon of the Holy Scriptures, which the learned Lud. Anton. Muratori published some years ago from an ancient manuscript in the library at *Milan,* and which is to be found in the *Antiq. Italicar. medii ævi.* tom. iii. diss. xliii. p. 853.

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visionary writer has taken the liberty to invent several dialogues or conversations between God and the angels, in order to insinuate, in a more easy and agreeable manner, the precepts which he thought useful and salutary, into the minds of his readers. But indeed, the discourse, which he puts into the mouths of those celestial beings, is more insipid and senseless than what we commonly hear among the meanest of the multitude [*g*].

The general character of the apostolic fathers.

XXII. We may here remark in general, that these apostolic fathers, and the other writers, who, in the infancy of the church, employed their pens in the cause of Christianity, were neither remarkable for their learning nor their eloquence. On the contrary, they express the most pious and admirable sentiments in the plainest and most illiterate style [*h*]. This, indeed, is rather a matter of honour than of reproach to the Christian cause; since we see, from the conversion of a great part of mankind to the gospel by the ministry of weak and illiterate men, that the progress of Christianity is not to be attributed to human means, but to a divine power.

[*g*] We are indebted for the best edition of the *Shepherd of* Hermas, to Fabricius, who has added it to the third volume of his *Codex Apocryphus N. Testamenti.* We find also some account of this writer in the *Biblioth. Græca,* of the same learned author, book v. chap. ix. sect. ix. p. 7. and also in Ittigius' dissertation, *De Patribus Apostolicis,* sect. 55. p. 184, &c.

[*h*] All the writers mentioned in this chapter are usually called *apostolic fathers.* Of these writers, Jo. Bapt. Cotelerius, and after him Le Clerc, have published a collection in two volumes, accompanied both with their own annotations, and the remarks of other learned men.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

Concerning the doctrine of the Christian church in this century.

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I. THE whole of the Christian religion is comprehended in two great points, of which the first regards what we are to believe, and the other relates to our conduct and actions; or, to express the matter more briefly, the gospel presents to us objects of *faith*, and rules of *practice*. The former are expressed by the apostles by the term *mystery*, or the *truth*; and the latter by that of *godliness*, or *piety* [*i*]. The rule and standard of both are those books which contain the Revelation that God made of his will to persons chosen for that purpose, whether before or after the birth of Christ. And these divine books are usually called *The Old and New Testament*.

The nature of the Christian religion.

II. The apostles and their disciples took all possible care, and that in the earliest times of the church, that these sacred books might be in the hands of all Christians, that they might be read and explained in the assemblies of the faithful, and thus contribute, both in private and in public, to excite and nourish in the minds of Christians a fervent zeal for the truth, and a firm attachment to the ways of piety and virtue. Those who performed the office of interpreters, studied above all things plainness and perspicuity. At the same time it must be acknowledged, that, even in this century, several Christians adopted that absurd and corrupt custom, used among the Jews, of darkening the plain words of the Holy Scriptures by insipid and forced allegories, and of drawing them violently from their proper and natural signification,

Method of interpreting the scriptures.

[*i*] 1 Tim. iii. 9. vi. 3. Tit. i. 1.

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nification, in order to extort from them certain mysteries and hidden significations. For a proof of this, we need go no further than the *Epistle of* Barnabas, which is yet extant.

Of teaching religion.

III. The method of teaching the sacred doctrines of religion, was, at this time, most simple, far removed from all the subtle rules of philosophy, and all the precepts of human art. This appears abundantly, not only in the writings of the apostles, but also in all those of the second century, which have survived the ruins of time. Neither did the apostles, or their disciples, ever think of collecting into a regular system the principal doctrines of the Christian religion, or of demonstrating them in a scientific and geometrical order. The beautiful and candid simplicity of these early ages rendered such philosophical niceties unnecessary; and the great study of those who embraced the gospel was rather to express its divine influence in their dispositions and actions, than to examine its doctrines with an excessive curiosity, or to explain them by the rules of human wisdom.

The apostles' creed.

IV. There is, indeed, extant, a brief summary of the principal doctrines of Christianity in that *form*, which bears the name of the *Apostles' Creed*, and which, from the fourth century downwards, was almost generally considered as a production of the apostles. All, however, who have the least knowledge of antiquity, look upon this opinion as entirely false, and destitute of all foundation [*k*]. There is much more reason and judgment in the opinion of those who think, that this Creed was not all composed at once, but from small beginnings, was imperceptibly augmented in proportion to the growth

[*k*] See Budæus' *Isagoge ad Theologiam.* lib. i. cap. ii. sect. 2. p. 441; as also Walchii *Introductio in libros Symbolicos*, lib. i. cap. ii. p. 87.

growth of heresy, and according to the exigencies and circumstances of the church, from whence it was designed to banish the errors that daily arose [*l*]. CENT. I. PART II.

V. In the earliest times of the church, all who professed firmly to believe that Jesus was the only Redeemer of the world, and who, in consequence of this profession, promised to live in a manner conformable to the purity of his holy religion, were immediately received among the disciples of Christ. This was all the preparation for *baptism* then required; and a more accurate instruction in the doctrines of Christianity was to be administered to them after their receiving that sacrament. But, when Christianity had acquired more consistence, and churches rose to the true God and his eternal Son, almost in every nation, this custom was changed for the wisest and most solid reasons. Then none were admitted to baptism, but such as had been previously instructed in the principal points of Christianity, and had also given satisfactory proofs of pious dispositions, and upright intentions. Hence arose the distinction between *catechumens*, who were in a state of probation, and under the instruction of persons appointed for that purpose; and *believers*, who were consecrated by baptism, and thus initiated into all the mysteries of the Christian faith. The distinction between catechumens and believers.

VI. The methods of instructing the *catechumens* differed according to their various capacities. Those, in whom the natural force of reason was small, were taught no more than the fundamental The catechumens differently instructed.

[*l*] This opinion is confirmed in the most learned and ingenious manner by Sir Peter King, in his *History of the Apostles' Creed*. Such, however, as read this valuable work with pleasure, and with a certain degree of prepossession, would do well to consider that its learned author, upon several occasions, has given us conjectures instead of proofs, and also that his conjectures are not always so happy, as justly to command our assent.

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principles and truths, which are, as it were, the basis of Christianity. Those, on the contrary, whom their instructors judged capable of comprehending, in some measure, the whole system of divine truth, were furnished with superior degrees of knowledge; and nothing was concealed from them, which could have any tendency to render them firm in their profession, and to assist them in arriving at Christian perfection. The care of instructing such was committed to persons who were distinguished by their gravity and wisdom, and also by their learning and judgment. And from hence it comes, that the ancient doctors generally divide their flock into two classes; the one comprehending such as were solidly, and thoroughly instructed; the other, those who were acquainted with little more than the first principles of religion; nor do they deny that the methods of instruction applied to these two sorts of persons were extremely different.

The care of the first Christians in the education of their youth.

VII. The Christians took all possible care to accustom their children to the study of the scriptures, and to instruct them in the doctrines of their holy religion; and schools were every where erected for this purpose, even from the very commencement of the Christian church. We must not, however, confound the *schools* designed only for children, with the *gymnasia*, or academies of the ancient Christians, erected in several large cities, in which persons of riper years, especially such as aspired to be public teachers, were instructed in the different branches, both of human learning, and of sacred erudition. We may, undoubtedly, attribute to the apostles themselves, and their injunctions to their disciples, the excellent establishments in which the youth, destined to the holy ministry, received an education suitable to the solemn office they were to undertake [*m*]. St.

[*m*] 2 Tim. ii. 2.

St. John erected a school of this kind at *Ephesus*, and one of the same nature was founded by Polycarp at *Symrna* [*n*]. But none of these were in a greater repute than that which was established at *Alexandria* [*o*], which was commonly called the *catechetical school*, and is generally supposed to have been erected by St. Mark [*p*]. CENT. I. PART II.

VIII. The ancient Christians are supposed by many to have had a *secret doctrine;* and if by this be meant, that they did not teach all in the same manner, or reveal all at once, and to all indiscriminately, the sublime mysteries of religion, there is nothing in this that may not be fully justified. It would have been improper, for example, to propose to those, who were yet to be converted to Christianity, the more difficult doctrines of the gospel, which surpass the comprehension of imperfect mortals. Such were, therefore, first instructed in those points which are more obvious and plain, until they became capable of higher and more difficult attainments in religious knowledge. Nay, more; even those who were already admitted into the society of Christians, were, in The secret doctrine, in what it consisted.

[*n*] Irenæus, *adv. Hæres.* lib. ii. cap. xxii. p. 148. ed. Massuet. Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. v. cap. xx. p. 188.

☞ [*o*] The Alexandrian school was renowned for a succession of learned doctors, as we find by the accounts of Eusebius and St. Jerom; for, after St. Mark, Pantænus, Clemens Alexandrinus, Origen, and many others, taught in it the doctrines of the gospel, and rendered it a famous seminary for Christian philosophy and religious knowledge. There were also at *Rome, Antioch, Cæsarea, Edessa,* and in several other places, schools of the same nature, though not all of equal reputation.

[*p*] See the dissertation Schmidius, *De Schola Catechetica Alexandrina;* as also Aulisius, *Delle Scuole Sacre,* book ii. ch. i. ii. p. 5—17. and chap. xxi. p. 92. The curious reader will find a learned account of the more famous Christian schools in the eastern parts, at *Edessa, Nisibis,* and *Seleucia,* and, indeed, of the ancient schools in general, in Assemanus' *Biblioth. Oriental. Clement. Vaticanæ,* tom. iii. par. II. p. 914—919.

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point of instruction, differently dealt with, according to their respective capacities. Those who consider the *secret doctrine* of this century in any other light, or give to it a greater extent than what we have here attributed to it, confound the superstitious practices of the following ages, with the simplicity of the discipline which prevailed at the time of which we write [*q*].

The lives and manners of the first Christians.

IX. The lives and manners of the Christians in this century are highly celebrated by most authors, and recommended to succeeding generations as unspotted models of piety and virtue. And if these encomiums be confined to the greatest part of those who embraced Christianity in the infancy of the church, they are certainly distributed with justice. But many run into extremes upon this head, and estimating the lives and manners of all by the illustrious examples of some eminent saints, or the sublime precepts and exhortations of certain pious doctors, fondly imagine, that every appearance of vice and disorder was banished from the first Christian societies. The greatest part of those authors who have written concerning the innocence and sanctity of the primitive Christians, have fallen into this agreeable error. And a gross error indeed it is, as the strongest testimonies too evidently prove.

Excommunication.

X. One of the circumstances which contributed chiefly to preserve, at least an external appearance of sanctity in the Christian church, was the right of excluding from thence, and from all participation of the sacred rites and ordinances of the gospel, such as had been guilty of enormous transgressions, and to whom repeated exhortations to repentance and amendment had been administered

[*q*] Many learned observations upon the *secret discipline* have been collected by the celebrated Christoph. Matt. Pfaffius, in his *Dissert. poster. de Præjudiciis Theolog.* sect. 13. p. 149, &c. *in Primitiis Tubingensibus.*

stered in vain. This right was vested in the church, from the earliest period of its existence, by the apostles themselves, and was exercised by each Christian assembly upon its respective members. The rulers, or doctors, denounced the persons whom they thought unworthy of the privileges of church-communion, and the people, freely approving or rejecting their judgment, pronounced the decisive sentence. It was not, however, irrevocable; for such as gave undoubted signs of their sincere repentance, and declared their solemn resolutions of future reformation, were re-admitted into the church, however enormous their crimes had been; but, in case of a relapse, their second exclusion became absolutely irreversible [*r*].

Controversies among Christians.

XI. It will easily be imagined, that unity and peace could not reign long in the church, since it was composed of Jews and Gentiles, who regarded each other with the bitterest aversion. Besides, as the converts to Christianity could not extirpate radically the prejudices which had been formed in their minds by education, and confirmed by time, they brought with them into the bosom of the church more or less of the errors of their former religions. Thus the seeds of discord and controversy were early sown, and could not fail to spring up soon into animosities and dissensions, which accordingly broke out, and divided the church. The first of these controversies, which was set on foot in the church of *Antioch*, regarded the necessity of observing the law of Moses, and its issue is mentioned by St. Luke in *The Acts of the Apostles* [*s*]. This controversy was followed by many others, either with the Jews, who were violently attached to the worship of their ancestors,

[*r*] See Morinus, *Comm. de Disciplina. Pœnitentiæ*, lib. ix. cap. xix. p. 670.

[*s*] Chap. xv.

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tors, or with the votaries of a wild and fanatical sort of philosophy, or with such as, mistaking the true genius of the Christian religion, abused it monstrously to the encouragement of their vices, and their indulgence of the appetites and passions [*t*]. St. Paul, and the other Apostles have, in several places of their writings, mentioned these controversies, but with such brevity, that it is difficult, at this distance of time, to come at the true state of the question in these various disputes.

Controversy about the terms of acceptance and salvation.

XII. The most weighty and important of all these controversies, was that which certain Jewish doctors raised at *Rome*, and in other Christian churches concerning the means of justification and acceptance with God, and the method of salvation pointed out in the word of God. The apostles, wherever they exercised their ministry, had constantly declared all hopes of acceptance and salvation delusive, except such as were founded on Jesus the Redeemer, and his all-sufficient *merits*, while the Jewish doctors maintained the *works* of the law to be the true efficient cause of the soul's eternal salvation and felicity. This latter sentiment not only led to many other errors extremely prejudicial to Christianity, but was also injurious to the glory of the divine Saviour. For those who lookod upon a course of life conformable to the law, as a meritorious title to eternal happiness, could not consider Christ as the Son of God, and the Saviour of mankind; but only as an eminent prophet, or a divine messenger, sent from above to enlighten and instruct a darkened world. It is not, therefore, surprising, that St. Paul took so much pains in his *Epistle to the Romans*,

[*t*] See, for an illustration of these points, Witsius' *Miscellanea Sacra*, tom. ii. *Exercit.* xx, xxi, xxii. p. 668. As also Camp. Vitringa, *Observ. Sacræ*, lib. iv. cap. ix. x. xi. p. 952.

mans, and in his other writings, to extirpate such a pernicious and capital error.

Judaizing Christians.

XIII. The controversy that had been raised concerning the necessity of observing the ceremonies of the Mosaic law, was determined by the apostles in the wisest and most prudent manner [*u*]. Their authority, however, respectable as it was, had not its full effect. For the prejudices, which the Jews, especially those who lived in *Palestine*, entertained in favour of the Mosaic law, and their ancient worship, were so deeply rooted in their minds, that they could not be thoroughly removed. The force of these prejudices was, indeed, somewhat diminished after the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the ruin of the temple, but not entirely destroyed. And hence, as we shall see in its place, a part of the judaizing Christians separated themselves from the rest, and formed a particular sect, distinguished by their adherence to the law of Moses.

CHAP. IV.

Concerning the rites and ceremonies used in the church during this century.

Baptism and the Lord's supper instituted by Christ.

I. THE Christian religion was singularly commendable on account of its beautiful and divine simplicity, which appears from the two great and fundamental principles on which it was built, *viz. faith and charity*. This simplicity was not, however, incompatible with certain external rights, and positive institutions, which, indeed, are necessary, in this imperfect state, to keep alive a sense of religion in the minds of men. The rites instituted by Christ himself were only two

[*u*] Acts xv.

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two in number, and these designed to continue to the end of the church here below, without any variation. These rites were *baptism* and the *holy supper*, which are not to be considered as mere ceremonies, nor yet as symbolic representations only, but also as ordinances accompanied with a sanctifying influence upon the heart and the affections of true Christians. And we cannot help observing here, that since the divine Saviour thought fit to appoint no more than two plain institutions in his church, this shews us that a number of ceremonies is not essential to his religion, and that he left it to the free and prudent choice of Christians to establish such rites as the circumstances of the times, or the exigencies of the church might require.

Rites instituted by the apostles.

II. There are several circumstances which incline us to think, that the friends and apostles of our blessed Lord, either tolerated through necessity, or appointed for wise reasons, many other external rites in various places. At the same time, we are not to imagine, that they ever conferred upon any person a perpetual, indelible, pontifical authority, or that they enjoined the same rites in all churches. We learn, on the contrary, from authentic records, that the Christian worship was, from the beginning, celebrated in a different manner in different places, and that, no doubt, by the orders, or at least with the approbation of the apostles and their disciples. In these early times it was both wise and necessary to shew, in the establishment of outward forms of worship, some indulgence to the ancient opinions, manners, and laws of the respective nations to whom the gospel was preached.

The Jewish rites retained in several places.

III. From hence it follows, that the opinion of those who maintain that the Jewish rites were adopted *every where*, in the Christian churches, by order of the apostles, or their disciples, is destitute

tute of all foundation. In those Christian societies, which were totally, or principally composed of Jewish converts, it was natural to retain as much of the Jewish ritual as the genius of Christianity would suffer, and a multitude of examples testify that this was actually done. But that the same translation of Jewish rites should take place in Christian churches, where there were no Jews, or a very small and inconsiderable number, is utterly incredible, because such an event was morally impossible. In a word, the external forms of worship used in the times of old, must necessarily have been regulated and modified according to the character, genius, and manners of the different nations on which the light of the gospel arose.

Public assemblies of Christians.

IV. Since then there was such a variety in the ritual and discipline of the primitive churches, it must be very difficult to give such an account of the worship, manners, and institutions, of the ancient Christians, as will agree with what was practised in all those countries where the gospel flourished. There are, notwithstanding, certain laws, whose authority and obligation were universal and indispensible among all Christians, and of these we shall here give a brief account. All Christians were unanimous in setting apart the first day of the week, on which the triumphant Saviour arose from the dead, for the solemn celebration of public worship. This pious custom, which was derived from the example of the church of *Jerusalem*, was founded upon the express appointment of the apostles, who consecrated that day to the same sacred purpose, and was observed universally throughout all the Christian churches, as appears from the united testimonies of the most credible writers [*w*]. The seventh day of the week was also

[*w*] Phil. Jac. Hartmannus, *De rebus gestis Christianorum sub Apostolis*, cap. xv. p. 387. Just. Henn. Bohmer. *Dissert.*

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also observed as a festival [*x*], not by the Christians in general, but by such churches only as were principally composed of Jewish converts, nor did the other Christians censure this custom as criminal and unlawful. It appears, moreover, that all the Christian churches observed two great anniversary festivals; the one in memory of Christ's glorious resurrection; and the other to commemorate the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles [*y*]. To these we may add the days on which the blessed martyrs laid down their lives for the truth, which days were probably dignified with particular solemnities and marks of veneration from the earliest times.

V. The places in which the first Christians assembled to celebrate divine worship, were, no doubt, the houses of private persons. But, in process of time, it became necessary, that these sacred assemblies should be confined to one fixed place, in

Dissert. i. *Juris. Eccles. Antiqui de statu die Christianor.* p. 20. &c.

[*x*] Steph. Curcellæus, *Diatriba de esu Sanguinis, Operum Theolog.* p. 958. Gab. Albaspinæus, *Observat. Eccles.* lib. i. *Observ.* xiii. p. 53. It is in vain that many learned men have laboured to prove, that, in *all* the primitive churches, both the first and last day of the week were observed as festivals. The churches of *Bithynia*, of which Pliny speaks in his letter to Trajan, had only *one stated day*, for the celebration of public worship; and that was, undoubtedly, the first day of the week, or what we call the *Lord's Day*.

[*y*] There are, it is true, learned men, who look upon it as a doubtful matter, whether or no the day of Pentecost was celebrated as a festival so early as the first century. See Bingham's *Antiquities of the Christian Church*, book xx. chap. vi. p. 120. But, notwithstanding this, there are many weighty reasons for believing that festival as ancient as that of Easter, which was celebrated, as all agree, from the very first rise of the church. It is also probable, that Friday, the day of Christ's crucifixion, was early distinguished by particular honours from the other days of the week. See Jac. Godofred, *in Codicem Theodosii*, tom. i. p. 138. Asseman *Biblioth. Orientat. Vatican.* tom. i. p. 217. 237. Martene, *Thesaur. Anecdot.* tom. v. p. 66.

in which the books, tables, and desks, required in divine service, might be constantly kept, and the dangers avoided, which, in those perilous times, attended their transportation from one place to another. And then, probably, the places of meeting, that had formerly belonged to private persons, became the property of the whole Christian community [z]. These few remarks, are, in my opinion, sufficient to determine that question, which has been so long, and so tediously debated, *viz, whether the first Christians had churches or not* [a]? Since, if any are pleased to give the name of church to a house, or the part of a house, which, though appointed as the place of religious worship, was neither separated from common use, nor considered as holy in the opinion of the people, it will be readily granted, that the most ancient Christians had churches.

The manner of conducting the public worship in these assemblies.

VI. In these assemblies the holy scriptures were publicly read, and for that purpose were divided into certain portions or lessons. This part of divine service was followed by a brief exhortation to the people, in which eloquence and art gave place to the natural and fervent expression of zeal and charity. If any declared themselves extraordinarily animated by the Holy Spirit, they were permitted to explain successively the divine will, while the other prophets who were present, decided how much weight and authority was to be attributed to what they said [b]. The prayers, which made a considerable part of the public worship, came in at the conclusion of these discourses, and

[z] See Camp. Vitringa, *De Synagoga vetere,* lib. i. par. III. cap. i. p. 432.

[a] See Blondel, *De Episcopis et Presbyteris,* sect. iii. p. 216. 243. 246. Just. Henn. Bohmer, *Dissert.* ii. *Juris. Eccles. Antiqui, de Antelucanis Christianorum Cœtibus,* sect. 4. p. 39. Bingham's *Antiquities of the Christian Church,* book viii. ch. i. sect. 3, 4, 5, 6.

[b] 1 Cor. xiv. 6.

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and were repeated by the people after the bishop or presbyter, who presided in the service [*c*]. To these were added certain hymns, which were sung, not by the whole assembly, but by persons appointed for that purpose, during the celebration of the Lord's supper, and the feasts of charity. Such were the essential parts of divine worship which were observed in all Christian churches, though perhaps the method and order in which they were performed were not the same in all [*d*].

The Lord's supper, and the feasts of charity.

VII. The prayers of the first Christians were followed by *oblations* of bread, wine, and other things; and hence both the ministers of the church, and the poor derived their subsistence. Every Christian, who was in an opulent condition, and indeed every one, according to their circumstances, brought with them their gifts, and offered them, as it were, unto the Lord [*e*]. Of the bread and wine presented in these offerings, such a quantity was separated from the rest as was required in the administration of the Lord's supper; this was consecrated by certain prayers pronounced by the bishop alone, to which the people assented, by saying *Amen* [*f*]. The holy supper was distributed by the *deacons;* and this sacred institution was followed by sober repasts, which, from the excellent end they were designed to

[*c*] See Justin Martyr, his second Apology, p. 98, &c.

[*d*] This must be understood of churches well established, and regulated by fixed and certain laws. For in the first Christian assemblies, which were yet in an imperfect and fluctuating state, one or other of these circumstances of divine worship may possibly have been omitted.

[*e*] See the dissertations of the venerable and learned Pfaff, *De oblatione et consecratione Eucharistica,* which are contained in his *Syntagma Dissertation. Theologic.* published at *Stutgard,* in 8vo. in the year 1720.

[*f*] Justin Martyr, *Apologia secunda,* p. 98. The several authors who have written concerning the manner of celebrating the Lord's supper, are mentioned by Jo. Alb. Fabricius, in his *Bibliograph. Antiquar.* cap. xi. p. 395, &c.

to promote, were called *agapæ*, or *feasts* of charity [*g*]. Many attempts have been made to fix precisely the nature of these social feasts. But here it must be again considered, that the rites and customs of the primitive Christians were very different in different countries, and that consequently these feasts, like other institutions, were not every where celebrated in the same manner. This is the true and only way of explaining all the difficulties that can arise upon this subject.

Baptism.

VIII. The sacrament of *baptism* was administered in this century, without the public assemblies, in places appointed, and prepared for that purpose, and was performed by immersion of the whole body in the baptismal font [*h*]. At first it was usual for all who laboured in the propagation of the gospel, to be present at that solemn ceremony; and it was also customary, that the converts should be baptized and received into the church by those under whose ministry they had embraced the Christian doctrine. But this custom was soon changed. When the Christian churches were well established, and governed by a system of fixed laws, then the right of baptizing the Christian converts was vested in the bishop alone. This right, indeed, he conferred upon the *presbyters* and *chorepiscopi*, or *country bishops*, when the bounds of the church were still further enlarged, reserving, however, to himself, the *confirmation* of the baptism, which was administered by a presbyter.

[*g*] The authors who have written concerning the *Agapæ*, or *Feasts of charity*, are mentioned by Ittigius, in his *Selecta Historiæ Eccles. Capita*, Sæc. ii. cap. iii. p. 180. and also by Pfaff, *De Originibus Juris Eccles.* p. 68.

[*h*] See the learned Dissertation of Jo. Gerard Vossius concerning baptism, *Disp.* i. *Thes.* vi. p. 31, &c. The reader will also find in the xith chapter and xxvth section of the *Bibliogr. Antiquar.* of the celebrated Fabricius, an account of the authors who have written upon this subject.

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ter [*i*]. There were, doubtless, several circumstantial rites and ceremonies observed in the administration of this sacrament for the sake of order and decency. Of these, however, it is not easy, nor, perhaps, possible, to give a certain or satisfactory account; since, upon this subject, we are too much exposed to the illusion which arises from confounding the customs of the primitive times with those of succeeding ages.

The sick anointed.

IX. Those who were visited with violent, or dangerous disorders, sent, according to the apostle's direction [*k*], for the rulers of the church, and, after confessing their sins, were recommended by them to the divine mercy, in prayers full of piety and fervour, and were also anointed with oil. This rite has occasioned many debates, and, indeed, they must be endless, since the silence of the ancient writers upon that head renders it impossible to decide the matter with any degree of certainty. The anointing the sick is very rarely mentioned in the ancient records of the church, though there is no reason to doubt of its having been an universal custom among Christians [*l*].

Fasting introduced.

X. Neither Christ nor his apostles enacted any law concerning *fasting*. A custom, however, prevailed among many Christians, of joining abstinence

[*i*] These observations will illustrate, and, perhaps, decide the question concerning the right of administering baptism, which has been so long debated among the learned, and with such ardour and vehemence. See Bohmer, *Dissert.* xi. *Juris Eccles.* p. 500. as also Le Clerc, *Biblioth. Universelle et Historique*, tom. iv. p. 93.

[*k*] James v. 14.

[*l*] The accounts which the ancient authors have given of this custom, are, the most of them, collected in a treatise published by Launoius, *De sacramentis unctionis infirmorum*, cap. i. p. 444. in the first volume of his works. Among these accounts there are very few drawn from the writers of the first ages, and some passages applicable to this subject, have been omitted by that learned author.

nence with their prayers, especially when they were engaged in affairs of extraordinary moment and importance [*m*]. As this custom was authorized by no public law, the time that was to be employed in these acts of abstinence was left to every one's private judgment; nor were those looked upon as criminal, who contented themselves with observing the rules of a strict temperance, without going any further [*n*]. In the most ancient times we find no mention of any public and solemn fasts, except upon the anniversary of Christ's crucifixion. But, in process of time, days of fasting were gradually introduced, first by custom, and afterwards by positive appointment; though it is not certain what those days were, nor whether they were observed in the first century. Those, notwithstanding, who affirm, that, in the time of the apostles, or soon after, the fourth and sixth days of the week were observed as fasts, are not, it must be acknowledged, destitute of specious arguments in favour of their opinion [*o*].

CHAP. V.

Concerning the divisions and heresies which troubled the church during this century.

I. THE Christian church was scarcely formed, when, in different places, there started up certain pretended reformers, who, not satisfied with the simplicity of that religion which was taught by the apostles, meditated changes of doctrine

Sects are formed in the time of the apostles,

[*m*] 1 Cor. vii. 5.

[*n*] See the *Shepherd of Hermas*, book iii. *Similitud.* v. p. 931, 935. edition of Fabricius.

[*o*] See Beverege's *Vindication of the Canon*, in the second volume of his edition of the *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 166.

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trine and worship, and set up a new religion, drawn from their own licentious imaginations. This we learn from the writings of the apostles, and particularly from the epistles of St. Paul, where we find, that some were for forcing the doctrines of Christianity into a conformity with the philosophical systems they had adopted [*p*], while others were as studious to blend with these doctrines, the opinions, customs, and traditions of the Jews. Several of these are mentioned by the apostles, such as Hymenæus, Alexander, Philetus, Hermogenes, Demas, and Diotrephes; though the four last are rather to be considered as apostates from the truth, than as corrupters of it [*q*].

and grow imperceptibly.

II. The influence of these new teachers was but inconsiderable at first. During the lives of the apostles, their attempts towards the perversion of Christianity were attended with little success, and the number of their followers was exceeding small. They, however, acquired credit and strength by degrees; and even from the first dawn of the gospel, laid, imperceptibly, the foundations of those sects, whose animosities and disputes produced, afterwards, such trouble, and perplexity in the Christian church. The true state of these divisions is more involved in darkness than any other part of ecclesiastical history; and this obscurity proceeds, partly from the want of ancient records, partly from the abstruse and unintelligible nature of the doctrines that distinguished these various sects; and, finally, from the ignorance and prejudices of those, who have transmitted to us the accounts

[*p*] 1 Tim. vi. 20. 1 Tim. i. 3, 4. Tit. iii. 9. Col. ii. 8.

[*q*] 2 Tim. ii. 18. and in other places. See also the accurate accounts given of these men by Vitringa, *Observ. Sacr.* lib. iv. cap. ix. p. 952. Ittigius, *De hæresiarchis ævi Apostol.* sect. i. cap. viii. p. 84. Buddeus, *De Ecclesia Apostolica*, cap. v. p. 292, &c.

counts of them which are yet extant. Of one thing, indeed, we are certain, and that is, that the most of these doctrines were chimerical and extravagant in the highest degree, and so far from containing any thing that could recommend them to a lover of truth, that they rather deserve to occupy a place in the history of human delusion and folly [*r*].

The sect of the Gnostics.

III. Among the various sects that troubled the tranquillity of the Christian church, the leading one was that of the Gnostics. These enthusiastic and self-sufficient philosophers boasted of their being able to restore mankind to the *knowledge (gnosis)* of the true and Supreme Being, which had been lost in the world. They also foretold the approaching defeat of the *evil principle*, to whom they attributed the creation of this globe, and declared in the most pompous terms, the destruction of his associates, and the ruin of his empire. An opinion has prevailed, derived from the authority of Clemens the Alexandrian, that the first rise of the Gnostic sect is to be dated after the death of the Apostles, and placed under the reign of the emperor Adrian; and it is also alleged,

[*r*] Certain authors have written professedly concerning the sects that divided the church in this, and the following century, such as Ittigius, in his treatise, *De hæresiarchis ævi Apostolici et Apostolico proximi*, printed at *Leipsick* in 1690, and also in the Appendix to the same work, published in 1696. Renatus, Massuet, in his *Dissertations*, prefixed to Irenæus, and Tillemont in his *Memoires pour servir à l'Histoire de l'Eglise*. But these authors, and others whom we shall not mention, have rather collected the materials, from which an history of the ancient sects may be composed, than written their history. Hinckelman, Thomasius, Dodwell, Horbius, and Basnage, have some of them promised, others of them attempted such a history; but none of them have finished this useful design. It is therefore to be wished, that some eminent writer, who, with a competent knowledge of ancient philosophy and literature, is also possessed of a penetrating and unbiassed judgment, would undertake this difficult, but interesting work.

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leged, that, before this time, the church enjoyed a perfect tranquillity, undisturbed by dissensions, or sects of any kind. But the smallest degree of attention to the language of the Holy Scriptures, not to mention the authority of other ancient records, will prevent our adopting this groundless notion. For, from several passages of the sacred writings [*s*], it evidently appears, that, even in the first century, the general meeting of Christians was deserted, and separate assemblies formed in several places, by persons infected with the Gnostic heresy, though, at the same time, it must be acknowledged, that this pernicious sect was not conspicuous either for its number, or its reputation, before the time of Adrian. It is proper just to observe here, that under the general appellation of Gnostics, are comprehended all those who, in the first ages of Christianity, corrupted the doctrine of the gospel by a profane mixture of the tenets of the oriental philosophy (concerning the origin of evil, and the creation of the world) with its divine truths.

sprung from the oriental philosophy,

IV. It was from this oriental philosophy, of which the leading principles have been already mentioned, that the Christian Gnostics derived their origin. If it was one of the chief tenets of this philosophy, that rational souls were imprisoned in corrupt matter, contrary to the will of the supreme Deity; there were, however, in this same system, other doctrines which promised a deliverance from this deplorable state of servitude and darkness. The oriental sages expected the arrival of an extraordinary messenger of the Most High upon earth; a messenger invested with a divine authority, endowed with the most eminent sanctity and wisdom, and peculiarly appointed to enlighten, with the knowledge of the Supreme Being,

[*s*] 1 John ii. 18. 1 Tim. vi. 20. Col. ii. 8.

Being, the darkened minds of miserable mortals, and to deliver them from the chains of the tyrants, and usurpers of this world. When therefore, some of these philosophers perceived that Christ and his followers wrought miracles of the most amazing kind, and also of the most salutary nature to mankind, they were easily induced to believe that he was the great Messenger expected from above, to deliver men from the power of the malignant *genii*, or spirits, to which, according to their doctrine, the world was subjected, and to free their souls from the dominion of corrupt matter. This supposition once admitted, they interpreted, or rather corrupted all the precepts and doctrines of Christ and his apostles, in such a manner as to reconcile them with their own pernicious tenets.

occasions many pernicious errors concerning the scriptures and other matters.

V. From the false principle above mentioned, arose, as it was but natural to expect, a multitude of sentiments and notions, most remote from the tenor of the gospel-doctrines, and the nature of its precepts. The Gnostic doctrine, concerning the creation of the world by one or more inferior beings, of an evil, or, at least, of an imperfect nature, led that sect to deny the divine authority of the books of the Old Testament, whose accounts of the origin of things so palpably contradicted this idle fiction. Through a frantic aversion to these sacred books, they lavished their encomiums upon the *serpent*, the first author of sin, and held in veneration some of the most impious and profligate persons of whom mention is made in sacred history. The pernicious influence of their fundamental principle carried them to all sorts of extravagance, filled them with an abhorrence of Moses and the religion he taught, and made them assert, that, in imposing such a system of disagreeable and severe laws upon the Jews, he was only actuated by the malignant author of this

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world, who consulted his own glory and authority, and not the real advantage of men. Their persuasion that *evil* resided in *matter*, as its centre and source, prevented their treating the body with that regard that is due to it, rendered them unfavourable to wedlock, as the means by which corporeal beings are multiplied, and led them to reject the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, and its future re-union with the immortal spirit. Their notion that malevolent *genii* presided in nature, and that from them proceeded all diseases and calamities, wars and desolations, induced them to apply themselves to the study of magic, to weaken the powers or suspend the influences of these malignant agents. I omit the mention of several other extravagancies in their system, the enumeration of which would be incompatible with the character of a compendious history.

Their opinions concerning Christ.

VI. The notions of this sect concerning Jesus Christ were impious and extravagant. For, though they considered him as the Son of the Supreme God, sent from the *pleroma*, or habitation of the Everlasting Father, for the happiness of miserable mortals; yet they entertained unworthy ideas, both of his person and offices. They denied his deity, looking upon him as the Son of God, and consequently inferior to the Father; and they rejected his humanity, upon the supposition that every thing concrete and corporeal is, in itself, essentially and intrinsically evil. From hence the greatest part of the Gnostics denied that Christ was clothed with a *real* body, or that he suffered *really*, for the sake of mankind, the pains and sorrows which he is said to have sustained, in the sacred history. They maintained, that he came to mortals with no other view, than to deprive the tyrants of this world of their influence upon virtuous and heaven-born souls, and, destroying the empire of these wicked spirits, to teach mankind,

kind, how they might separate the divine mind from the impure body, and render the former worthy of being united to the Father of spirits.

Their moral doctrines.

VII. Their doctrine, relating to morals and practice, was of two kinds, and those extremely different from each other. The greatest part of this sect adopted rules of life that were full of austerity, recommended a strict and rigorous abstinence, and prescribed the most severe bodily mortifications, from a notion that they had a happy influence in purifying and enlarging the mind, and in disposing it for the contemplation of celestial things. As they looked upon it to be the unhappiness of the soul to have been associated, at all, to a malignant, terrestrial body; so they imagined that the more that body was extenuated, the less it would corrupt and degrade the mind, or divert it from pursuits of a spiritual and divine nature; all the Gnostics, however, were not so severe in their moral discipline. Some maintained that there was no moral difference in human actions; and thus confounding right with wrong, they gave a loose rein to all the passions, and asserted the innocence of following blindly all their motions, and of living by their tumultuous dictates [*t*]. There is nothing surprising or unaccountable in this difference between the Gnostic moralists: For, when we examine the matter with attention, we shall find, that the same doctrine may very naturally have given rise to these opposite sentiments. As they all in general considered the body as the centre and source of evil, those of that sect, who were of a morose and austere disposition, would be hence naturally led to mortify and combat the body as the enemy of the soul; and those who were of a voluptuous turn,

[*t*] See Clemens Alexandrinus *Stromatum*, lib. iii. cap. v. p. 529, edit. Potter.

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turn, might also consider the actions of the body as having no relation, either of congruity or incongruity, to the state of a soul in communion with God.

How their doctrines were supported.

VIII. Such extraordinary doctrines had certainly need of an undoubted authority to support them; and, as this authority was not to be found in the writings of the evangelists or apostles, recourse was had to fables and stratagems. When the Gnostics were challenged to produce the sources from whence they had drawn such strange tenets, and an authority proper to justify the confidence with which they taught them; some referred to fictitious writings of Abraham, Zoroaster, Christ, and his apostles; others boasted of their having drawn these opinions from certain secret doctrines of Christ, which were not exposed to vulgar eyes; others affirmed, that they had arrived at these sublime degrees of wisdom by an innate force and vigour of mind; and others asserted, that they were instructed in these mysterious parts of theological science by Theudas, a disciple of St. Paul, and by Matthias, one of the friends of our Lord. As to those among the Gnostics who did not utterly reject the books of the New Testament, it is proper to observe, that they not only interpreted those sacred books most absurdly, by neglecting the true spirit of the words, and the intention of the writers, but also corrupted them, in the most perfidious manner, by curtailing, and adding, in order to remove what was unfavourable, or to produce something conformable to their pernicious and extravagant system.

Whence the dissensions among this sect.

IX. It has been already observed, that the Gnostics were divided in their opinions before they embraced Christianity. This appears from the account which has been given above of the oriental philosophy; and from hence we may see the reason why they were formed into so many different sects.

sects after the receiving the Christian faith. For as every one endeavoured to force the doctrines of the gospel into a conformity with their particular sentiments and tenets, so Christianity must have appeared in different forms, among the different members of a sect, which passed, however, under one general name. Another circumstance, which also contributed to the diversity of sects among this people, was, that some being Jews by birth, (as Cerinthus and others,) could not so easily assume that contempt of Moses, and that aversion to his history which were so virulently indulged by those who had no attachment to the Jewish nation, nor to its religious institutions. We observe, in the last place, that the whole religious and philosophical system of the Gnostics was destitute of any sure or solid foundation, and depended, both for its existence and support, upon the airy suggestions of genius and fancy. This consideration alone is a sufficient key to explain the divisions that reigned in this sect, since *uniformity* can never subsist with assurance, but upon the basis of evident and substantial truth; and *variety* must naturally introduce itself into those systems and institutions which are formed and conducted by the sole powers of invention and fancy.

Dositheus.

X. As then the Christian religion was, in its first rise, corrupted in several places by the mixture of an impious and chimerical philosophy with its pure and sublime doctrines, it will be proper to mention here the heads of those sects, who, in the first century, cast a cloud upon the lustre of the rising church. Among these, many gave the first place to Dositheus, a Samaritan. It is certain, that about the time of our Saviour, a man, so named, lived among the Samaritans, and abandoned that sect; but all the accounts we have of him tend to shew, that he is improperly placed among those called *Heretics*, and should rather be ranked

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ranked among the enemies of Christianity. For this delirious man set himself up for the Messiah, whom God had promised to the Jews, and disowning, of consequence, the divine mission of Christ, could not be said to corrupt his doctrine [*u*].

Simon Magus not properly an heretic.

XI. The same observation holds true with respect to Simon Magus. This impious man is not to be ranked among the number of those who corrupted with their errors the purity and simplicity of the Christian doctrine; nor is he to be considered as the parent, and chief of the heretical tribe, in which point of light he has been injudiciously viewed by almost all ancient and modern writers. He is rather to be placed in the number of those who were enemies to the progress and advancement of Christianity. For it is manifest, from all the records we have concerning him, that, after his defection from the Christians, he retained not the least attachment to Christ, but opposed himself openly to the divine Saviour, and assumed to himself blasphemously the title of the *supreme power of God* [*w*].

His history.

XII. The accounts which ancient writers give us of Simon the magician, and of his opinions, seem so different, and, indeed, so inconsistent with each other, that certain learned men have considered them as regarding two different persons, bearing the name of Simon; the one a magician, and an apostate from Christianity; the other a Gnostic philosopher. This opinion, which supposes a fact, without any other proof than a seeming difference in the narration of the ancient historians, ought not to be too lightly adopted. To depart from the authority of ancient writers in this

[*u*] See Basnage, *Histoire des Juifs*, lib. ii. cap. xiii. Rich. Simon, *Critique de la Bibliothéque des Auteurs Ecclesiastiques de Du Pin*, tom. iii. cap. xiii. p. 304.

[*w*] *Origen adv. Cel um*, lib. v. p. 272. edit. Spenceri.

this matter is by no means prudent; nor is it necessary to reconcile the different accounts already mentioned, whose inconsistency is not real, but apparent only. Simon was by birth a Samaritan, or a Jew: when he had studied philosophy at *Alexandria* [*x*], he made a public profession of magic, (which was nothing very uncommon at that time,) and persuaded the Samaritans, by fictitious miracles, that he had received from God the power of commanding and restraining those evil beings by which mankind were tormented [*y*]. Having seen the miracles which Philip wrought by a divine power, he joined himself to this apostle, and embraced the doctrine of Christ, but with no other design than to receive the power of working miracles, in order to promote a low interest, and to preserve and increase his impious authority over the minds of men. Then St. Peter pointed out to him solemnly the impiety of his intentions, and the vanity of his hopes, in that severe discourse recorded in the viiith chapter of the *Acts of the Apostles;* then the vile impostor not only returned to his former ways by an entire defection from the Christians, but also opposed, wherever he came, the progress of the gospel, and even travelled into different countries with that odious design. Many things are recorded of this impostor, of his tragical end, and of the statue erected to him at *Rome*, which the greatest part of the learned reject as fabulous. They are at least uncertain, and destitute of all probability [*z*].

XIII.

[*x*] *Clementina Homil.* ii. p. 633. tom. ii. *P. P. Apost.*

[*y*] Acts viii. 9, 10.

[*z*] See Beausobre *Histoire de Manich.* p. 203. 395. Van. Dale's Dissertation, *De Statua Simoni,* subjoined to his discourse concerning the ancient oracles. Dellingius, *Observat. Sacr.* lib. i. *Observ.* xxxvi. p. 140. Tillemont, *Memoires pour servir à l'Histoire de l'Eglise,* tom. i. p. 340. ☞ The circumstances of Simon's tragical end, *viz.* his having pretended to fly, by a miraculous power, in order to please the emperor

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XIII. It is beyond all doubt, that Simon was in the class of those philosophers, who not only maintained the eternity of *matter*, but also the existence of an *evil being*, who presided, and thus shared the empire of the universe with the supreme and beneficent *Mind*. And as there was a good deal of variety in the sentiments of the different members of this sect, it is more than probable, that Simon embraced the opinion of those, who held, that matter moved from eternity, by an intrinsic and necessary activity, had by its innate force, produced, at a certain period of time, from its own substance, the *evil principle* which now exercises dominion over it, with all his numerous train of attendants. From this pernicious doctrine, the other errors attributed to him concerning *fate*, *the indifference of human actions*, *the impurity of the human body*, *the power of magic*, and such like extravagances, flow naturally, as from their true and genuine source [*a*]. But this odious magician still proceeded to more shocking degrees of enormity in his monstrous fictions; for he pretended, that in his person resided the greatest and most

emperor Nero, who was fond of magic; his falling to the ground, and breaking his limbs, in consequence of the prayers of St. Peter and St. Paul; and his putting himself to death, through shame and despair, to have been thus defeated by the superior power of the apostles; all these romantic fictions have derived their credit from a set of ecclesiastical writers, who, on many occasions, prefer the *marvellous* to the *truth*, as favourable to a system of religion, or rather superstition, which truth and reason loudly disown.

[*a*] The dissertation of Horbius, concerning Simon the magician, which was published not along ago in the *Biblioth. Haresiologica* of Voigtius, tom. i. par. III. p. 511. seems preferable to any thing else upon that subject, though it be a juvenile performance, and not sufficiently finished. He follows the steps of his Master Thomasius, who, with admirable penetration, discovered the true source of that multitude of errors with which the Gnostics, and particularly Simon, were so dismally polluted. Voigtius, in the place above cited, p. 567. gives a list of the other authors who have made any mention of this impostor.

most powerful of the divine *æons;* that another *æon* of the female sex, the mother of all human souls, dwelt in the person of his mistress Helena [*b*], and that he came, by the command of God upon earth, to abolish the empire of those that had formed this material world, and to deliver Helena from their power and dominion.

Menander.

XIV. Another wrong-headed teacher, named Menander, a Samaritan also by birth, appeared in this century. He is said to have been instructed by Simon; though this opinion has no other foundation than the general notion, that all the various sects of the Gnostics derived their origin from that magician; and this notion is entirely groundless. Be that as it will, Menander should rather be ranked with the lunatics, than with the heretics of antiquity, seeing he also took it into his head to exhibit himself to the world as the promised Saviour. For it appears, by the testimonies of Irenæus, Justin, and Tertullian, that he pretended to be one of the *æons*, sent from the *pleroma*, or celestial regions, to succour the souls that lay groaning under bodily oppression and servitude, and to maintain them against the violence and stratagems of the *dæmons* that hold the reins of empire in this sublunary world. As this doctrine was built upon the same foundation with that of Simon Magus, therefore the ancient writers looked upon him as the instructor of Menander.

Nicolaitans.

XV. If then we separate these three persons now successively mentioned, from the heretics of the first century, we may rank among the chief of the Christian sectaries, and particularly of those that

[*b*] Some very learned men have given an allegorical explication of what the ancient writers say concerning Helena, the ministers of this magician, and imagine, that by the name Helena, is signified, either *matter*, or *spirit*. But nothing is more easy than to shew upon what slight foundations this opinion is built.

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that bear the general name of Gnostics, the Nicolaitans, whom Christ himself mentions with abhorrence by the mouth of his apostle [*c*]. It is true, indeed, that the divine Saviour does not reproach them with erroneous opinions concerning the deity, but with the licentiousness of their practice, and the contempt of that solemn law which the apostles had enacted (Acts xv. 29.) against fornication, and the use of *meats* offered to idols. It is, however, certain, that the writers of the second and the following centuries, Irenæus, Tertullian, Clemens, and others, affirm, that the Nicolaitans adopted the sentiments of the Gnostics concerning the *two principles* of all things, the *æons*, and the origin of this terrestrial globe. The authority of these writers would be entirely satisfactory in this matter, were there not some reason to imagine, that they confounded, in their narrations, two sects very different from each other; that of the Nicolaitans, mentioned in the Revelations; and another, founded by a certain Nicolaus, in the second century, upon the principles of the Gnostics. But this is a matter of too doubtful a nature to justify a positive decision on either side.

Cerinthus, and the Cerinthians.

XVI. There is no sort of doubt, but that Cerinthus may be placed with propriety among the Gnostics, though the learned are not entirely agreed whether he belongs to the heretics of the first or the second century [*d*]. This man was by birth a Jew, and having applied himself to letters and philosophy at *Alexandria* [*e*], attempted, at length, to form a new and singular system of doctrine

[*c*] Rev. ii. 6, 14, 15.

[*d*] See Sam. Basnage, *Annal. Polit. Eccles.* tom. ii. p. 6. Faydit, *Eclaircissemens sur l'Histoire Eccles. de deux premiers Siecles*, cap. v. p. 64. The opinion of these two learned men is opposed by Buddeus, *De Eccles. Apostolica*, cap. v. p. 412.

[*e*] Theodoret. *Fabul. Hæret.* lib. ii. cap. iii. p. 219. tom. iii. opp.

trine and discipline by a monstrous combination of the doctrines of Christ, with the opinions and errors of the Jews and Gnostics. From the latter he borrowed their *pleroma*, their *æons*, their *demiurge*, &c. and so modified and tempered these fictions, as to give them an air of Judaism, which must have considerably favoured the progress of his heresy. He taught "that the Creator of this "world, whom he considered also as the sove- "reign and lawgiver of the Jewish people, was "a *being* endowed with the greatest virtues, and "derived his birth from the *Supreme God;* that "this *being* fell, by degrees, from his native vir- "tue, and his primitive dignity; that the *Supreme* "*God*, in consequence of this, determined to de- "stroy his empire, and sent upon earth, for this "purpose, one of the ever happy and glorious "*æons*, whose name was Christ, that this Christ "chose for his habitation the person of Jesus, a "man of the most illustrious sanctity and justice, "the son of Joseph and Mary, and descending "in the form of a *dove*, entered into him while "he was receiving the baptism of John in the "waters of *Jordan;* that Jesus, after his union "with Christ, opposed himself with vigour to the "*God of the Jews*, and was, by his instigation, "seized and crucified by the Hebrew chiefs; that "when Jesus was taken captive, Christ ascended "up on high, so that the man Jesus alone was "subjected to the pains of an ignominious death." Cerinthus required of his followers, that they should worship the Father of Christ, even the Supreme God, in conjunction with the Son; that they should abandon the law-giver of the Jews, whom he looked upon as the Creator of the world; that they should retain a part of the law given by Moses, but should, nevertheless, employ their principal attention and care to regulate their lives by the precepts of Christ. To encourage them

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to this, he promised them the resurrection of this mortal body, after which was to commence a scene of the most exquisite delights, during Christ's earthly reign of a thousand years, which was to be succeeded by an happy and never ending life in the celestial world. For Cerinthus held, that Christ will one day return upon earth, and, renewing his former union with the man Jesus, will reign with his people in the land of *Palestine* during a thousand years.

The Nazarenes and Ebionites properly belong to the second century.

XVII. It has been already observed, that the church was troubled with early disputes concerning the law of Moses, and the Jewish rites. Those, however, who considered the observance of the Mosaic rites as necessary to salvation, had not, in this first century, proceeded so far as to break off all communion with such as differed from them in this matter. Therefore they were still regarded as brethren, though of the weaker sort. But when, after the second destruction of *Jerusalem*, under the emperor Adrian, these zealots for the Jewish rites deserted the ordinary assemblies of Christians, and established separate meetings among themselves, when they were numbered with those sects who had departed from the pure doctrine of Christ. Hence the name Nazarenes and Ebionites, by which the judaizing Christians were distinguished from those who looked upon the Mosaic worship and ceremonies as entirely abolished by the appearance of Christ upon earth. We shall only observe further under this head, that, though the Nazarenes and Ebionites are generally placed among the sects of the apostolic age, yet they really belong to the second century, which was the earliest period of their existence as a sect.

THE

SECOND CENTURY.

PART I.

The EXTERNAL HISTORY of the CHURCH.

CHAPTER I.

Concerning the prosperous events that happened to the church during this century.

The state of the republic.

I. IN this century, the Roman sceptre was, for the most part, swayed by princes of a mild and moderate turn. Trajan, though too eagerly bent upon the pursuit of glory, and not always sufficiently attentive to his conduct, nor prudent in his measures, was nevertheless endowed with many virtues, and the predominant lines of his character were clemency and benevolence. Adrian was of a more harsh and untractable temper; yet very far from deserving the reputation of a wicked or unjust prince. He was of a mixed character, chargeable with several vices, and estimable on account of many excellent qualities. The Antonines were illustrious models of humanity, goodness, and sublime virtue. Severus himself, in whose character and disposition such an unexpected and disadvantageous change was effected, was, in the beginning of his reign, unjust towards none, and even the Christians were treated by him with equity and mildness.

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The progress of Christianity in the Roman empire.

II. This lenity of the emperors was singularly advantageous to those Christians who lived under the Roman sceptre; it suspended sometimes their sufferings, and alleviated the burthen of their distresses. For though edicts of a severe nature were issued out against them, and the magistrates, animated by the priests, and by the multitude, shed their blood with a cruelty which frequently exceeded even the dictates of the most barbarous laws; yet there was always some remedy that accompanied these evils, and softened their severity. Trajan, however condemnable in other respects, on account of his conduct towards the Christians, was yet engaged, by the representations that Pliny the younger gave of them, to forbid all *search to be made after them*. He also prohibited all anonymous libels and accusations, by which the Christians had so often been perfidiously exposed to the greatest sufferings [*a*]. Antoninus Pius went so far as to enact penal laws against their accusers [*b*]. And others, by various acts of beneficence and compassion, defended them from the injurious treatment of the priests and people. Hence it came to pass, that in this century, the limits of the church were considerably enlarged, and the number of converts to Christianity prodigiously augmented. Of the truth of this, we have the most respectable and authentic testimonies in the writings of the ancients; testimonies, whose evidence and authority are every way superior to the vain attempts which some have made to obscure and weaken them [*c*].

III. It

[*a*] See Pliny's epistles, book x. let. xcviii.

[*b*] Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.* lib. iv. cap. xiii. p. 126.

[*c*] See Moyle's letters concerning the thundering legion, with the remarks which Dr. Mosheim has annexed to his Latin translation of them, published at the end of a work entitled *Syntagma Dissert. ad Sanctiores Disciplinas pertinent.*

See

III. It is not easy to point out particularly the different countries on which the light of celestial truth first arose in this age. The ancient records that yet remain, do not give us information sufficient to determine that matter with certainty; nor is it, indeed, a matter of much importance. We are, however, assured, by the most unexceptionable testimonies, that Christ was worshipped as God almost throughout the whole East, as also among the Germans, Spaniards, Celts, Britons, and many other nations [*d*]; but which of them received the gospel in the first century, and which in the second, is a question unanswerable at this distance of time. Pantænus, the head of the Alexandrian school, is said to have conveyed to the Indians the knowledge of Christ [*e*]. But, after an attentive examination of the account which Eusebius gives of this matter, it will appear, that these Indians were certain Jews, inhabitants of the *Happy Arabia*, whom Bartholomew the apostle had before instructed in the doctrines of Christianity. For, according to the account of St. Jerom, Pantænus found among this people the gospel of St. Matthew, which they had received from Bartholomew their first teacher.

What countries were enlightened with the gospel.

IV. The Christian religion, having penetrated among the Gauls, seems to have passed from thence into that part of Germany which was subject to the Romans, and from thence into Britain [*f*]. Certain German churches, indeed,

The conversion of the Germans.

See also the dialogue between Justin Martyr and Trypho the Jew, p. 341.

[*d*] Irenæus *contr. Hæres.* lib. i. cap. x. Tertullian *adv. Judæos*, cap. 7. p. 212.

[*e*] Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* book v. c. x. Jerome *Catal. Scriptor. Eccles.* c. xxxvi.

[*f*] Ursinus, Bebelius, and others, have written learnedly concerning the origin of the German churches, which Tertullian

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are fondly ambitious of deriving their origin from St. Peter, and from the companions of the other apostles. The Britons also are willing to believe, upon the authority of Bede, that in this century, and under the reign of Marcus Antoninus, their king Lucius addressed himself to Eleutherus, the Roman Pontiff, for doctors to instruct him in the Christian religion, and having obtained his request, embraced the gospel [*g*]. But, after all, these traditions are extremely doubtful, and are, indeed, rejected by such as have learning sufficient to weigh the credibility of ancient narrations.

Conversion of the Gauls.

V. It is very possible, that the light of Christianity may have reached *Transalpine Gaul*, now called *France*, before the conclusion of the apostolic age, either by the ministry of the apostles themselves, or their immediate successors. But we have no records that mention, with certainty, the establishment of Christian churches in this part of *Europe* before the second century. Pothinus, a man of exemplary piety and zeal, set out from *Asia* in company with Irenæus and others, and laboured in the Christian cause with such success among the Gauls, that churches were established at *Lyons* and *Vienna*, of which Pothinus himself was the first bishop [*h*]. VI. The

tullian and Irenæus mention as erected in this century. Add to these, the ample illustrations of this subject which are to be found in Liron's *Singularités Histor. et Litter.* tom. iv. p. 193. The celebrated Dom. Calmet has judiciously refuted the common and popular accounts of the first Christian doctors in Germany, in his *Hist. de la Lorraine*, tom. i. *Diss. sur. les Evêques de Treves*, Par. III. IV. See also Bollandus, *Act. Sanctor.* p. 922. Hontheim *Diss. de Æra Episcop. Trevir.* tom. i. *Hist. Trevir.*

[*g*] See Usher *Antiq. Eccles. Britan.* cap. i. p. 7; as also Godwin, *De conversione Britan.* cap. i. p. 7. and Rapin's *History of England.*

[*h*] See the epistle of Petrus De Marca, concerning the first rise of Christianity in *France*, published among the dissertations

Translations of the New Testament.

VI. The writers of this century attribute this rapid progress of Christianity to the power of God, to the energy of divine truth, to the extraordinary gifts which were imparted to the first Christians, and the miracles and prodigies that were wrought in their behalf, and at their command; nor do they ascribe almost any part of the amazing success that attended the preaching of the gospel, to the intervening succours of human means, or second causes. But this is carrying the matter too far. The wisdom of human counsels, and the useful efforts of learning and prudence, are too inconsiderately excluded from this account of things. For it is beyond all doubt, that the pious diligence and zeal, with which many learned and worthy men recommended the sacred writings, and spread them abroad in translations, which rendered them useful to those who are ignorant of the language in which they were written, contributed much to the success and propagation of the Christian doctrine. Latin versions of these sacred books were multiplied by the pious labours of the learned, with particular diligence, because that language was now more universal than any other [*i*]. Among these versions, that which was distinguished by the name of the Italic obtained universally the preference, and was followed by the Syriac, Egyptian, and Æthiopic versions, whose dates it is impossible to fix with certainty [*k*].

VII.

sertations of that author; and also by Valesius, in his edition of Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History.* See also *Histoire Literaire de la France,* tom. i. p. 223. Liron's *Singularités Histor. et Literaires,* vol. iv.

[*i*] See Augustin. *De doctrina Christiana,* lib. ii. cap. xi. p. 85. edit. Calixt.

[*k*] See Jo. Gottlob. Carpzov. *Critica sacra Vet. Test.* p. 663.

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Christians defended, and heretics refuted.

VII. Among the obstacles that retarded the progress of Christianity, the impious calumnies of its enemies were the most considerable. The persons, the characters, and religious sentiments of the first Christians were most unjustly treated, and most perfidiously misrepresented to the credulous multitude [*l*], who were restrained by this only from embracing the gospel. Those, therefore, who, by their *apologetic* writings in favour of the Christians, destroyed the poisonous influence of detraction, rendered, no doubt, signal service to the doctrine of Christ, by removing the chief impediment that retarded its progress. Nor were the writings of such as combated with success the ancient heretics without their use, especially in the early periods of the church. For the insipid and extravagant doctrines of these sectaries, and the gross immoralities with which they were chargeable, were extremely prejudicial to the Christian religion, by disgusting many at whatever carried the Christian name. But when it was known, by the writings of those who defended Christianity, that these corrupt heretics were held in aversion, instead of being patronized by the true followers of Christ, then the clouds that were cast over the religion of Jesus were dispersed, and the prejudices

☞ [*l*] Nothing more injurious can be conceived than the terms of contempt, indignation, and reproach, which the Heathens employed in expressing their hatred against the Christians, who were called by them *atheists*, because they derided the heathen polytheism; *magicians*, because they wrought miracles; *self-murderers*, because they suffered martyrdom cheerfully for the truth; *haters of the light*, because, to avoid the fury of the persecutions raised against them, they were forced, at first, to hold their religious assemblies in the night; with a multitude of other ignominious epithets employed against them by Tacitus, Suetonius, Celsus, &c. See Bingham's *Antiquities of the Christian Church*, book i. cap. ii. p. 5.

prejudices that had been raised against it were fully removed.

VIII. It is easier to conceive than to express, how much the *miraculous powers*, and *extraordinary gifts*, which were displayed in the ministry of the first heralds of the gospel, contributed to enlarge the bounds of the church. These gifts, however, which were given for wise and important reasons, began gradually to diminish in proportion as the reasons ceased for which they were conferred. And, accordingly, when almost all nations were enlightened with the truth, and the number of Christian churches increased daily in all places, then the miraculous gifts of tongues began gradually to decrease. It appears, at the same time, from unexceptionable testimonies, that the other extraordinary gifts with which the omnipotence and wisdom of the Most High had so richly endowed the rising church, were in several places continued during this century [*m*]. Miracles and extraordinary gifts.

IX. We cannot indeed place, with any degree of certainty, among the effects of a miraculous power yet remaining in the church, the story of the *Christian legion*, who, by their prayers, drew from heaven a refreshing shower upon the army of Marcus Antoninus, ready to perish with thirst, when that emperor was at war with the Marcomanni. This remarkable event (which gave to the Christians, to whom it was attributed, the name of the *thundering legion*, on account of the thunder and lightning that destroyed the enemy, while the shower revived the fainting Romans) has been mentioned by many writers. But whether it was really miraculous or not, has been much disputed among learned men. Some think The miracle of the thundering legion.

[*m*] Pfanner, *De donis miraculosis.* Spencer, *Not. ad Orig. contra Celsum*, p. 5, 6. Mammachius *Originum et Antiquitat. Christianar.* tom. i. p. 363, &c.

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think that the Christians, by a pious sort of mistake, attributed this unexpected and seasonable shower, which saved the Roman army, to a miraculous interposition; and this opinion is, indeed, supported by the weightiest reasons, as well as by the most respectable authorities [*n*].

More than dubious.

X. Let us distinguish what is doubtful in this story, from that which is certain. It is certain, that the Roman army, enclosed by the enemy, and reduced to the most deplorable, and even desperate condition, by the thirst under which they languished in a parched desert, was revived by a sudden and unexpected rain. It is also certain, that both the Heathens and the Christians looked upon this event as extraordinary and miraculous; the former attributing it to Jupiter, Mercury, or the power of magic; the latter to Christ, interposing thus unexpectedly, in consequence of their prayers. It is still further

[*n*] Such readers as are desirous to know what learned men have alleged on both sides of this curious question, may consult Witsius' *Dissertat. de Legione Fulminatrice*, which is subjoined to his *Ægyptiaca*, in defence of this miracle; as also what is alleged against it by Dan. Larroque, in a discourse upon that subject, subjoined to the *Adversaria Sacra* of Matth. Larroque, his father. But above all, the controversy between Sir Peter King * and Mr. Walter Moyle upon this subject, is worthy of the attention of the curious; and likewise the dissertation of the learned Jablonski, inserted in the eight volume of the *Miscellanea Leipsiensia*, p. 417. under the title of *Spicilegium de Legione Fulmatrice*. This last-mentioned author investigates with great acuteness, the reasons and motives which induced the Christians to place so inconsiderately this *shower* in the list of miracles.

☞ [*] It is by mistake that Dr. Mosheim confounds Sir Peter King, Lord Chancellor of England, with the person who carried on the controversy with Moyle concerning the thundering legion. Moyle's adversary was Mr. King, a clergyman, rector of Topsham, near Exeter, which was the place of his nativity, and also of the famous Chancellor's, who bore his name. See the letters addressed to the Rev. Mr. King, in the Posthumous Collection of Locke's Letters, published by Collins. See also Lardner's Collection of Heathen and Jewish Testimonies, &c. vol. ii. p. 249, &c.

ther beyond all doubt, that a considerable number of Christians served, at this time, in the Roman army; and it is extremely probable, that in such trying circumstances of calamity and distress, they implored the merciful interposition and succours of their God and Saviour. And as the Christians of these times looked upon all extraordinary events as miracles, and ascribed to their prayers all the uncommon and singular occurrences of an advantageous nature that happened to the Roman empire, it will not appear surprising, that, upon the present occasion, they attributed the deliverance of Antoninus and his army to a miraculous interposition which they had obtained from above. But, on the other hand, it must be carefully observed, that it is an invariable maxim, universally adopted by the wise and judicious, that no events are to be esteemed miraculous, which may be rationally attributed to natural causes, and accounted for by a recourse to the ordinary dispensations of providence; and as the unexpected shower, which restored the expiring force of the Romans, may be easily explained without rising beyond the usual and ordinary course of nature, the conclusion is manifest; nor can it be doubtful in what light we are to consider that remarkable event.

Sedition and slaughter of the Jews.

XI. The Jews were visited with new calamities, first under Trajan, and then under Adrian, when under the standards of Barcocheba, who gave himself out for the Messiah, they rose in rebellion against the Romans. In consequence of this sedition, prodigious numbers of that miserable people were put to the sword, and a new city, called *Ælia Capitolina*, was raised upon the ruins of *Jerusalem*, into which no Jew was permitted to enter [o]. This defeat of the Jews tended

[o] Justin Mart. *Dial cum* Tryphone, p. 49. 278.

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tended to confirm, in some measure, the external tranquillity of the Christian church. For that turbulent and perfidious nation had hitherto oppressed and vexed the Christians, not only by presenting every where to the Roman magistrates complaints and accusations against them, but also by treating them in the most injurious manner in *Palestine* and the neighbouring countries, because they refused to succour them against the Romans. But this new calamity, which fell upon that seditious nation, put it out of their power to exercise their malignity against the disciples of Jesus, as they had formerly done.

Philosophers converted to Christianity.

XII. Among other accessions to the splendor and force of the growing church, we may reckon the learned and ingenious labours of those philosophers and literati, who were converted to Christianity in this century. I am sensible that the advantages arising from hence to the cause of true religion will be disputed by many; and, indeed, when the question is thus proposed, whether, upon the whole, the interests of Christianity have gained or lost by the writings of the learned, and the speculations of philosophers that have been employed in its defence, I confess myself incapable of solving it in a satisfactory manner. For nothing is more manifest than this truth, that the noble simplicity and dignity of religion were sadly corrupted in many places, when the philosophers blended their opinions with its pure doctrines, and were audacious enough to submit that divine system of faith and piety to be scrutinized and modified by the fallible rule of imperfect reason.

CHAP.

CHAP. II

Concerning the Calamitous events which happened to the church in this century.

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I. IN the beginning of this century, there were no laws in force against the Christians, for the senate had annulled the cruel edicts of Nero; and Nerva had abrogated the sanguinary laws of his predecessor Domitian. But, notwithstanding this, a horrid custom prevailed, of persecuting the Christians, and even of putting them to death, as often as a bloody priesthood, or an outrageous populace, set on by them, demanded their destruction. Hence it happened, that, even under the reign of the good Trajan, popular clamours [*p*] were raised against the Christians, many of whom fell victims to the rage of a merciless multitude. Such were the riotous proceedings that happened in *Bithynia*, under the administration of Pliny the younger, who, upon that occasion, wrote to the emperor, to know in what manner he was to conduct himself towards the Christians. The answer which he received from Trajan amounted to this, "That the Christians were "not to be *officiously sought after* [*q*], but that "such as were *accused* and *convicted of an adhe-* "*rence to Christianity* were to be put to death as "wicked citizens, if they did not return to the "religion of their ancestors."

The persecution under Trajan.

II. This edict of Trajan, being registered among the public and solemn laws of the Roman empire, set bounds, indeed, to the fury of those that persecuted the Christians, but was, however, the

The effects of Trajan's order to Pliny.

[*p*] Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. iii. cap. xxxii. p. 103.

[*q*] See Pliny's letters, book x. let. xcvii. and xcviii. which have been illustrated by many learned men, such as Vossius, Bohmer, Baldwin, Heuman and others.

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the occasion of martyrdom to many, even under the best emperors. For, as often as an accuser appeared, and the person accused of an adherence to Christianity confessed the truth of the charge, the only alternative then was apostasy or death, since a magnanimous perseverance in the Christian faith was, according to the edict of Trajan, a capital crime. And, accordingly, the venerable and aged Simeon, son of Cleophas, and bishop of *Jerusalem*, was, by this very law, crucified in consequence of an accusation formed against him by the Jews [*r*]. By the same law, also, was the great and pious Ignatius, bishop of *Antioch*, ordered by Trajan himself to expire in the Roman theatre, exposed to the rapacity of furious beasts [*s*]; for, as the law denounced simply death to such as were convicted of an attachment to Christ, the kind of punishment was left by the legislator to the choice of the judge.

Persecution under Adrian.

III. Such of the Christians as could conceal their profession were indeed sheltered under the law of Trajan, which was, therefore, a disagreeable restraint upon the heathen priests, who breathed nothing but fury against the disciples of Jesus. The office of an accuser was also become dangerous, and very few were disposed to undertake it, so that the sacerdotal craft was now inventing new methods to oppress the Christians. The law of Trajan was, therefore, artfully evaded under the reign of his successor Adrian. The populace, set in motion by their priests, demanded of their magistrates with one voice, during the public games, the destruction of the Christians; and the magistrates, fearing that a sedition might be the consequence of despising or opposing

[*r*] Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. iii. cap. xxxii. p. 103.

[*s*] See the *Acta Martyrii Ignatiani*, published by Ruinart, and also in the Collection of the *Apostolic Fathers.*

opposing these popular clamours, were too much disposed to indulge them in their request. During these commotions, Serenus Granianus proconsul of *Asia*, represented to the emperor how barbarous and unjust it was to sacrifice to the fury of a lawless multitude, persons who had been convicted of no crime. Nor was his wise and equitable remonstrance without effect; for Adrian, by an edict issued out to these magistrates, prohibited the putting the Christians to death, unless they were regularly accused and convicted of crimes committed against the laws; and this edict appears to have been a solemn renewal of the law of Trajan [*t*]. The moderation of the emperor, in this edict, may, perhaps, have been owing to the admirable *apologies* of Quadratus and Aristides, in favour of the Christians, which were every way proper to dispel the angry prejudices of a mind that had any sense of equity and humanity left. But it was not from the Romans alone, that the disciples of Christ were to feel oppression; Barcochebas, the fictitious king of the Jews, whom Adrian afterwards defeated, vented against them all his fury, because they refused to join his standards, and second his rebellion [*u*].

The persecution under Antoninus Pius.

IV. The law of Adrian, according to its natural sense, seemed to cover the Christians from the fury of their enemies, since it rendered them punishable on no other account than the *commission of crimes*, and since the magistrates refused to interpret their religion as the *crime* mentioned in the imperial edict. Therefore their enemies invented a new method of attacking them under the reign of Antoninus Pius, even by accusing them of impiety and atheism. This calumny was refuted in

[*t*] Compare Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. iv. cap. ix. with Balduinus *ad Edicta Princip. in Christianos*, p. 73.

[*u*] Justin Mart. *Apologia secunda*, p. 72. edit. Colon.

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in an *apology* for the Christians, presented to the emperor by Justin Martyr, in consequence of which, this equitable prince ordered, that all proceedings against them should be regulated by the law of Adrian [*w*]. This, however, was not sufficient to suppress the rage of blood-thirsty persecution; for, some time after this, on occasion of some earthquakes which happened in *Asia*, the people renewed their violence against the Christians, whom they considered as the authors of those calamities, and treated consequently in the most cruel and injurious manner. The emperor, informed of these unjust and barbarous proceedings, addressed an edict to the whole province of *Asia*, in which he denounced capital punishment against such as should, for the future, accuse the Christians, without being able to prove them guilty of any crime [*x*].

The persecution under Marcus Antoninus.

V. This worthy prince was succeeded by Marcus Aurelius Antoninus the philosopher, whom most writers have celebrated beyond measure on account of his extraordinary wisdom and virtue. It is not, however, in his conduct towards the Christians that we must look for the reasons of these pompous encomiums; for here, the clemency and justice of that emperor suffer a strange eclipse.

[*w*] Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. iv. cap. xxvi. p. 148.

[*x*] Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. iv. cap. xiii. p. 126. ☞ It is proper to be observed, that the word *crime*, in several former edicts, had not been sufficiently determined in its signification; so that we find the enemies of the Christians, and even the Roman magistrates, applying this term to the profession of Christianity. But the equitable edict of this good emperor decided that point on the side of humanity and justice, as appears from the letter he addressed to the province of Asia, in favour of the persecuted Christians, and which concludes with the following words: "If any one, for the future, shall molest "the Christians, and accuse them merely on account of their "religion, let the person thus accused be discharged, though "he is found to be a Christian, and the accuser be punished "according to the rigour of the law."

eclipse. He did not, indeed, revoke the edict of Antoninus Pius, or abrogate the laws which the preceding emperors had enacted in favour of the Christians; but he did what was equally pernicious to them. Without examining impartially their cause, he lent an easy and attentive ear to all the most virulent insinuations of their enemies, and more especially to the malignant calumnies of the philosophers, who accused them of the most horrid crimes, and the most monstrous impiety, and charged them with renewing the shocking feast of Thyestes, and the incestuous amours of the Theban prince. So that, if we except that of Nero, there was no reign under which the Christians were more injuriously and cruelly treated, than under that of the wise and virtuous Marcus Aurelius; and yet there was no reign under which such numerous and victorious *Apologies* were published in their behalf. Those which Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, and Tatian drew up upon this occasion, are still extant.

The calamities suffered by the Christians under him.

VI. This emperor issued out against the Christians, whom he regarded as a vain, obstinate, and vicious set of men, edicts [*y*] which, upon the whole were very unjust; though we do not know, at this distance of time, their particular contents. In consequence of these imperial edicts, the judges and magistrates received the accusations, which even slaves, and the vilest of the perjured rabble brought against the followers of Jesus. And the Christians were put to the most cruel tortures, and were condemned to meet death in the most barbarous forms, notwithstanding their perfect innocence, and their persevering and solemn denial of the horrid crimes laid to their charge. The imperial edicts were so positive and express against inflicting

[*y*] See Melito *ap.* Euseb. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. iv. cap. xxvi. p. 147.

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inflicting punishment upon such of the Christians as were guilty of no crime, that the corrupt judges, who through motives of interest or popularity, desired their destruction, were obliged to suborn false accusers to charge them with actions that might bring them within the reach of the laws. Hence many fell victims to cruel superstition and popular fury, seconded by the corruption of a wicked magistracy, and the connivance of a prince, who, with respect to one set of men, forgot the principles of justice and clemency which directed his conduct towards all others. Among these victims, there were many men of illustrious piety, and some of eminent learning and abilities, such as the holy and venerable Polycarp, bishop of *Smyrna*, and Justin Martyr, so deservedly renowned for his erudition and philosophy [z]. Many churches, particularly those of *Lyons* and *Vienna*, were almost entirely destroyed, during this violent persecution, which raged in the year 177, and will be an indelible stain upon the memory of the prince by whose order it was carried on [a].

Their state under Commodus and Severus.

VII. During the reign of Commodus, the Christians suffered very little; no general persecution raged against them; and any cruelties they endured were confined to a small number, who had newly abandoned the Pagan superstitions [b]. But the scene changed towards the latter end of this century, when Severus was declared emperor. Then *Asia*, *Egypt*, and the other provinces, were dyed with the blood of martyrs, as appears from

[z] A full account of their martyrdom is to be found in the valuable work of Ruinart, intitled, *Acta Sincera Martyrum.*

[a] See the letter of the Christians at *Lyons*, concerning this persecution, which is to be found in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*, book v. chap. ii. as also in Fox's *Martyrology*, vol. i.

[b] Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. v. cap. xxiv. p. 191. cap. xvi. p. 183. cap. xviii. p. 186. cap. xix. p. 187.

from the testimonies of Tertullian, Clemens of *Alexandria*, and other writers. Those, therefore, are not to be followed, who affirmed, that the Christians suffered nothing under Severus, before the beginning of the third century which was distinguished by the cruel edicts of this emperor against their lives and fortunes. For as the imperial laws against the Christians were not abrogated, and the iniquitous edicts of Trajan and Marcus Antoninus were still in force, there was a door, of consequence, open to the fury and injustice of corrupt magistrates as often as they were pleased to exercise them upon the church. It was this series of calamities, under which it groaned towards the conclusion of the second century, which engaged Tertullian to write his *Apology*, and several other books, in defence of the Christians.

The calumnies employed to render them odious.

VIII. It is very easy to account for the sufferings and calamities with which the disciples of Jesus were loaded, when we consider how they were blackened and rendered odious by the railings, the calumnies, and libels of the Heathen priests, and the other defenders of a corrupt and most abominable system of superstition. The injurious imputations, the horrid charges of which we took notice above, are mentioned by all those who have written in defence of the Christians, and ought indeed to stand always upon record, as a proof both of the weakness and wickedness of their adversaries. Nothing more frivolous and insignificant than the objections which the most famous defenders of Paganism opposed to the truth of Christianity at this time; and such as desire a convincing proof of this assertion, have only to read the arguments of Celsus, on that subject. This philosopher wrote against the Christians during the reign of Adrian, and was admirably refuted in the following century, by Ori-

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gen, who represents him as an Epicurean (a mistake which has been almost generally followed,) whereas it appears, with the utmost probability, that he was a Platonic philosopher of the sect of Ammonius [*c*]. Be that as it will, Celsus was a trifling caviller, as is manifest from the answer of Origen; nor do his writings against Christianity serve any other purpose than to shew his malignant and illiberal turn of mind.

Fronto, the rhetorician, and Crescens, the Cynic philosopher, made also some wretched attempts against Christianity. The efforts of the former are only known by the mention that is made of them by Minutius Felix [*d*]; and the enterprises of the latter were confined to a vehement zeal for the ruin of the Christians, and a virulent persecution of Justin Martyr, which ended in the cruel death of that eminent saint [*e*].

☞ [*c*] The learned Dr. Lardner does not think it possible that Celsus could have been of the sect of Ammonius, since the former lived and wrote in the second century, whereas the latter did not flourish before the third. And indeed we learn from Origen himself, that he knew of two only of the name of Celsus, one who lived in the time of Nero, and the other in the reign of Adrian, and afterwards. The latter was the philosopher who wrote against Christianity.

[*d*] *Octavius*, p. 226. edit. Heraldi.

[*e*] Justin Mart. *Apologia secunda*, p. 21. Tatian, *Orat. contra. Græcos*, p. 72. edit. Worthii.

PART II.

The INTERNAL HISTORY of the CHURCH

CHAP. I.

Concerning the state of letters and philosophy during this century.

The state of learning.

I. UNDER the reign of Trajan, letters and philosophy came forth from the retreat where they had languished during the savage tyranny of his predecessors, and, by the auspicious protection of this excellent prince, were in some measure restored to their former lustre [*f*]. This happy revolution in the republic of letters, was, indeed, but of a short duration, as it was not supported by the following emperors, who were, for the most part, averse to literary pursuits. Even Marcus Antoninus, who surpassed them all in learning, gave protection and encouragement to the Stoics alone; and, after the example of that supercilious sect, treated the arts and sciences with indifference and contempt [*g*]. And here we see the true reason why the writers of this century are, in general, so much inferior to those of the former, in point of elegance and purity, eloquence and taste.

Learned men.

II. It must be observed, at the same time, that this degeneracy of erudition and taste did not amount to an utter extinction of the one and the other. For even in this century, there were both among the Greeks and Romans, men of eminent

[*f*] Plin. epist. lib. iii. ep. 18.
[*g*] In the first book of his meditations, sect. 7. 17.

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nent genius and abilities, who set off, in the most advantageous manner, the learning of the times in which they lived. Among the learned Grecians, the first place is due to Plutarch, a man of vast erudition, whose knowledge was various, but indigested, and whose philosophical taste was corrupted by the sceptical tenets of the academics. There were, likewise, in all the more considerable cities of the Roman empire, rhetoricians, sophists, and grammarians, who, by a variety of learned exercises, seemed zealous in forming the youth to their arts of eloquence and declamation, and in rendering them fit, by their talents and their acquisitions, to be useful to their country. But the instruction acquired in these schools was more specious than solid; and the youth who received their education in them, distinguished themselves at their entrance upon the active stage of life, more by empty declamation, than by true eloquence; more by pompous erudition, than by wisdom and dexterity in the management of public affairs. The consequence of this was, that the rhetoricians and sophists, though agreeable to the corrupt taste of the times, which was incapable, generally speaking, of perceiving the native charms of truth, yet fell into contempt among the prudent and the wise, who held in derision the knowledge and education that were acquired in their auditories. Besides the schools now mentioned, there were two public academies in the empire; the one at *Rome*, founded by Adrian, in which all the sciences were taught; and the other at *Berytus* in *Phœnicia*, which was principally destined for the education of the youth in the sciences of law [*h*].

Stoics.

III. Many philosophers of all the different sects flourished at this time, whose names we think it not

[*h*] See the Meditations of M. Antoninus, book i. sect. 7. 10.

not necessary to mention [*i*]. Two, however, there were, of such remarkable and shining merit, as rendered them real ornaments to the Stoic philosophy, which the meditations of Marcus Antoninus and the manual of Epictetus abundantly testify. These two great men had more admirers than disciples and followers; for, in this century, the Stoical sect was not in the highest esteem, as the rigour and austerity of its doctrine were by no means suited to the dissolute manners of the times. The Platonic schools were more frequented for several reasons, and particularly for these two, that their moral precepts were less rigorous and severe than those of the Stoics, and their doctrines more conformable to, or, rather, less incompatible with the common opinions concerning the gods, but of all the philosophers, the Epicureans enjoyed the greatest reputation, and had undoubtedly the greatest number of followers, because their opinions tended to encourage the indolent security of a voluptuous and effeminate life, and to banish the remorse and terrors that haunt vice, and naturally incommode the wicked in their sensual pursuits [*k*].

Platonics.

Epicureans.

IV. Towards the conclusion of this century, a new sect of philosophers arose of a sudden, spread with amazing rapidity throughout the greatest part of the Roman empire, swallowed up almost all the other sects, and was extremely detrimental to the cause of Christianity. *Alexandria in Egypt*, which had been, for a long time, the seat of learning, and as it were, the centre of all the liberal arts and sciences, gave birth to this new philosophy. Its votaries chose to be called Platonics: though, far from adhering to all the tenets

The rise of the new Platonics in Egypt.

[*i*] Justin Mart. *Dialog. cum Tryphone,* opp. p. 218, &c. We find also many of these philosophers mentioned in the meditations of the Emperor Marc. Antoninus.

[*k*] Lucian *Pseudomant.* p. 763. tom. i. opp.

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of Plato, they collected from the different sects such doctrines as they thought conformable to truth, and formed thereof one general system. The reason, then, why they distinguished themselves by the title of Platonics, was, that they thought the sentiments of Plato, concerning that most noble part of philosophy, which has the Deity, and things invisible for its objects, much more rational and sublime than those of the other philosophers.

V. What gave to this new philosophy a superior air of reason and dignity, was, the unprejudiced spirit of candour and impartiality on which it seemed to be founded. This recommended it particularly to these real sages, whose inquiries were accompanied with wisdom and moderation, and who were sick of those arrogant and contentious sects, which required an invariable attachment to their particular systems. And, indeed, nothing could have a more engaging aspect than a set of men, who, abandoning all cavil, and all prejudices in favour of any party, professed searching after the truth alone, and were ready to adopt, from all the different systems and sects, such tenets as they thought agreeable to it. From hence also they were called Eclectics. It is, however, to be observed, as we hinted in the former section, that though these philosophers were attached to no particular sect, yet they preferred, as appears from a variety of testimonies, the sublime Plato to all other sages, and approved of the most of his opinions concerning the Deity, the universe, and the human soul.

Called also Eclectics.

Their discipline approved by the Christians.

VI. This new species of Platonism was embraced by such of the Alexandrian Christians as were desirous to retain, with the profession of the gospel, the title, the dignity, and the habit of philosophers. It is also said to have had the particular approbation of Athenagoras, Pantænus, Clemens

Clemens the Alexandrian, and all those who, in this century, were charged with the care of the public school [*l*] which the Christians had at *Alexandria*. These sages were of opinion, that *true philosophy*, the greatest and most salutary gift of God to mortals, was scattered in various portions through all the different sects; and that it was, consequently, the duty of every wise man, and more especially of every Christian doctor, to gather it from the several corners where it lay dispersed, and to employ it, thus re-united, in the defence of religion, and in destroying the dominion of impiety and vice. The Christian Eclectics had this also in common with the others, that they preferred Plato to the other philosophers, and looked upon his opinions concerning God, the human soul, and things invisible, as conformable to the spirit and genius of the Christian doctrine.

The new method of teaching philosophy introduced by Ammonius Saccas.

VII. This philosophical system underwent some changes, when Ammonius Saccas, who taught, with the highest applause in the Alexandrian school about the conclusion of this century, laid the foundations of that sect which was distinguished by the name of the New Platonics. This learned man was born of Christian parents, and never, perhaps, gave up entirely the outward profession of that divine religion in which he had been educated [*m*]. As his genius was vast and compre-

[*l*] The title and dignity of philosophers delighted so much these honest men, that though they were advanced in the church to the rank of presbyters, they would not abandon the philosopher's *cloak*. See Origen, *Epist. ad. Eusebium*, tom. i. opp. p. 2. edit. de la Rue.

☞ [*m*] Porphyry, in his third book against the Christians, maintains that Ammonius deserted the Christian religion, and went over to Paganism as soon as he came to that time of life, when the mind is capable of making a wise and judicious choice. Eusebius, on the other hand, denies this assertion; maintains, that Ammonius persevered constantly in the profession

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comprehensive, so were his projects bold and singular. For he attempted a general reconciliation or coalition of all sects, whether philosophical or religious, and taught a doctrine which he looked upon as proper to unite them all, the Christians not excepted, in the most perfect harmony.

fession of Christianity, and is followed in this opinion by Valesius, Bayle, Basnage, and others. The learned Fabricius is of opinion, that Eusebius confounded together two persons who bore the name of Ammonius, one of whom was a Christian writer, and the other a Heathen philosopher. See Fabric. *Biblioth. Græca,* lib. iv. cap. xxvi. p. 159. The truth of the matter seems to have been, that Ammonius Saccas was a Christian who adopted with such dexterity the doctrines of the pagan philosophy, as to appear a Christian to the Christians, and a Pagan to the Pagans. See Brucket's *Histoire Critica Philosophiæ,* vol. ii. and iii. Since the first edition of this work was published, the learned Dr. Lardner has maintained, not without a certain degree of asperity, which is unusual in his valuable writings, the opinion of Fabricius, against Eusebius, and particularly against Dr. Mosheim. See his *Collection of Heathen and Jewish Testimonies,* vol. iii. p. 195, &c. Dr. Mosheim was once of the same opinion with Fabricius, and he maintained it in a Dissertation, *De ecclesia turbata per recentiores Platonicos;* but he afterwards saw reason to change his mind. These reasons may be seen in his book, *De rebus Christianorum ante Const. Mag.* p. 281, &c. They indeed weigh little with Dr. Lardner, who, however, opposes nothing to them but mere assertions, unsupported by the smallest glimpse of evidence. For the letter of Origen he quotes from Eusebius, is so far from proving that Ammonius was *merely* a Heathen philosopher, and not a Christian, that it would not be sufficient to demonstrate that there was ever such a person as Ammonius in the world; since he is not so much as named in that letter. But allowing with Valesius that it is Ammonius whom Origen has in view when he talks of the philosophical master from whom he and Heracles received instruction, it seems very whimsical to conclude from thence, that Ammonius was no Christian. The coalition between Platonism and Christianity, in the second and third centuries, is a fact too fully proved to be rendered dubious by mere affirmations. The notion, therefore, of two persons bearing the name of Ammonius, the one a heathen philosopher, and the other a Christian writer, of which Dr. Lardner seems so fond, rests upon little more than an hypothesis formed to remove an imaginary difficulty.

mony. And herein lies the difference between this new sect and the Eclectics, who had, before this time, flourished in *Egypt*. The Eclectics held, that in every sect, there was a mixture of good and bad, of truth and falsehood; and accordingly, they chose and adopted out of each of them such tenets as seemed to them conformable to reason and truth, and rejected such as they thought repugnant to both. Ammonius, on the contrary, maintained, that the great principles of all philosophical and religious truth were to be found equally in all sects; that they differed from each other only in their method of expressing them, and in some opinions of little or no importance; and that, by a proper interpretation of their respective sentiments, they might easily be united into one body. It is farther to be observed, that the propensity of Ammonius to singularity and paradox, led him to maintain, that all the Gentile religions, and even the Christian, were to be illustrated and explained by the principles of this universal philosophy; but that, in order to this, the fables of the priests were to be removed from Paganism, and the comments and interpretations of the disciples of Jesus from Christianity.

The principles of the Ammonian or Eclectic philosophy.

VIII. This arduous design, which Ammonius had formed of bringing about a coalition of all the various philosophical sects, and all the different systems of religion that prevailed in the world, required many difficult and disagreeable things in order to its execution. Every particular sect and religion must have several of its doctrines curtailed or distorted, before it could enter into the general mass. The tenets of the philosophers, the superstitions of the Heathen priests, the solemn doctrines of Christianity, were all to suffer in this cause, and forced allegories were to be subtilly employed in removing the difficulties with which it was attended. How this vast project

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iect was effected by Ammonius, the writings of his disciples and followers, that yet remain, abundantly testify. In order to the accomplishing his purpose, he supposed, that true philosophy derived its origin and its consistence from the eastern nations; that it was taught to the Egyptians by Hermes; that it was brought from them to the Greeks, by whose vain subtilties, and litigious disputes, it was rendered somewhat obscure and deformed; but was, however, preserved in its original purity by Plato, who was the best interpreter of Hermes, and of the other oriental sages. He maintained, that all the different religions that prevailed in the world, were, in their original integrity, conformable to the genius of this ancient philosophy; but that it unfortunately happened, that the symbols and fictions, under which, according to the eastern manner, the ancients delivered their precepts and their doctrines, were, in process of time, erroneously understood both by priests and people in a literal sense; that, in consequence of this, the invisible beings and demons, whom the Supreme Deity had placed in the different parts of the universe as the ministers of his providence, were, by the suggestions of superstition, converted into gods, and worshipped with a multiplicity of vain ceremonies. He therefore insisted, that all the religions of all nations should be restored to their original purity, and reduced to their primitive standard, *viz.* "The ancient "philosophy of the east;" and he affirmed, that this his project was agreeable to the intentions of Jesus Christ, whose sole view, in descending upon earth, was, to set bounds to the reigning superstition, to remove the errors that had crept into the religions of all nations, but not to abolish the ancient theology from whence they were derived.

Its chief articles.

IX. Taking these principles for granted, Ammonius adopted the doctrines which were received in

in *Egypt*, the place of his birth and education, concerning the *universe*, and the *Deity*, considered as constituting one great whole; as also concerning the *eternity of the world*, the *nature of souls*, the *empire of providence*, and the *government of this world by demons*. For it is more evident, that the Egyptian philosophy, which was said to be derived from Hermes, was the basis of that of Ammonius; or, as it is otherwise called, of *modern Platonism*; and the book of Jamblichus, concerning the *mysteries of the Egyptians*, puts the matter beyond dispute. Ammonius, therefore, associated the sentiments of the Egyptians with the doctrines of Plato, which was easily done by adulterating some of the opinions of the latter, and forcing his expressions from their obvious and natural sense. And, to finish this conciliatory scheme, he so interpreted the doctrines of the other philosophical and religious sects, by the violent succours of art, invention, and allegory, that they seemed, at length, to bear some resemblance of the Egyptian and Platonic systems.

The moral discipline of Ammonius.

X. To this monstrous coalition of heterogeneous doctrines, its fanatical author added a rule of life and manners, which carried an aspect of high sanctity and uncommon austerity. He, indeed, permitted the people to live according to the laws of their country, and the dictates of nature; but a more sublime rule was laid down for the wise; they were to raise above all terrestrial things, by the towering efforts of holy contemplation, those souls whose origin was celestial and divine. They were ordered to extenuate, by hunger, thirst, and other mortifications, the sluggish body, which confines the activity, and restrains the liberty, of the immortal spirit; that thus, in this life, they might enjoy communion with the Supreme Being, and ascend after death, active and unincumbered, to the universal Parent

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to live in his presence for ever. As Ammonius was born and educated among the Christians, he set off, and even gave an air of authority to these injunctions, by expressing them partly in terms borrowed from the sacred scriptures, of which we find a vast number of citations also in the writings of his disciples. To this austere discipline, he added the pretended art of so purging and refining that faculty of the mind which receives the images of things, as to render it capable of perceiving the dæmons, and of performing many marvellous things by their assistance. This art which the disciples of Ammonius called *theurgy*, was not, however, communicated to all the schools of this fanatical philosopher, but only to those of the first rank.

His opinions concerning God and Christ.

XI. The extravagant attempts of Ammonius did not cease here. To reconcile the popular religions of different countries, and particularly the Christian, with this new system, he fell upon the following inventions; 1*st*, He turned into a mere allegory the whole history of the gods, and maintained, that those beings whom the priests and people dignified with this title, were no more than celestial ministers, to whom a certain kind of worship was due; but a worship inferior to that which was to be reserved for the Supreme Deity. 2*dly*, He acknowledged Christ to be a most excellent man, the friend of God, the admirable *theurge*; he denied, however, that Jesus designed to abolish entirely the worship of demons, and of the other ministers of divine Providence; and affirmed on the contrary, that his only intention was to purify the ancient religion, and that his followers had manifestly corrupted the doctrine of their divine master [*n*].

XII.

[*n*] What we have here mentioned concerning the doctrines and opinions of Ammonius, is gathered from the writings and disputa-

XII. This new species of philosophy, imprudently adopted by Origen and many other Christians, was extremely prejudicial to the cause of the gospel, and to the beautiful simplicity of its celestial doctrines. For hence it was, that the Christian doctors began to introduce their subtle and obscure erudition into the religion of Jesus, to involve in the darkness of a vain philosophy, some of the principal truths of Christianity, that had been revealed with the utmost plainness, and were indeed obvious to the meanest capacity; and to add, to the divine precepts of our Lord, many of their own, which had no sort of foundation in any part of the sacred writings. From the same source arose that melancholy set of men, who have been distinguished by the name of Mystics, whose system, when separated from the Platonic doctrine concerning the nature and origin of the soul, is but a lifeless mass, without any vigour, form, or consistence. Nor did the evils, which sprung from this Ammonian philosophy, end here. For, under the specious pretext of the necessity of contemplation, it gave occasion to that slothful and indolent course of life, which continues to be led by myriads of monks retired in cells, and sequestered from society, to which they are neither useful by their instructions, nor by their examples. To this philosophy we may trace, as to their source, a multitude of vain and foolish ceremonies, proper only to cast a veil over truth, and to nourish super-

The pernicious effects of this philosophy.

disputations of his disciples, who are known by the name of the Modern Platonics. This philosopher has left nothing in writing behind him; nay, he imposed a law upon his disciples not to divulge his doctrines among the multitude, which law, however, they made no scruple to neglect and violate. See Porphyr. *Vit. Plotini,* cap. iii. p. 97. edit. Fabricii, lib. iv. *Biblioth. Græca.* At the same time, there is no sort of doubt, but, that all these inventions belong properly to Ammonius, whom all the latter Platonics acknowledge as the founder of this sect, and the author of their philosophy.

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superstition; and which are, for the most part, religiously observed by many, even in the times in which we live. It would be endless to enumerate all the pernicious consequences that may be justly attributed to this new philosophy, or rather to this monstrous attempt to reconcile falsehood with truth, and light with darkness. Some of its most fatal effects were, its alienating the minds of many, in the following ages, from the Christian religion; and its substituting, in the place of the pure and sublime simplicity of the gospel, an unseemly mixture of Platonism and Christianity.

The state of learning among Christians.

XIII. The number of learned men among the Christians, which was very small in the preceding century, grew considerably in this. Among these there were few rhetoricians, sophists, or orators. The most part were philosophers attached to the Eclectic system, though they were not all of the same sentiments concerning the utility of letters and philosophy. Those who were themselves initiated into the depths of philosophy, were desirous that others, particularly such as aspired to the offices of bishops or doctors, should apply themselves to the study of human wisdom, in order to their being the better qualified for defending the truth with vigour, and instructing the ignorant with success. Others were of a quite different way of thinking upon this subject, and were for banishing all argumentation and philosophy from the limits of the church, from a notion that erudition might prove detrimental to the true spirit of religion. Hence the early beginnings of that unhappy contest between *faith* and *reason*, *religion* and *philosophy*, *piety* and *genius*, which increased in the succeeding ages, and is prolonged, even to our times, with a violence that renders it extremely difficult to be brought to a conclusion. Those who maintained that learning and philosophy were rather advantageous than detrimental to the cause of

of religion, gained, by degrees, the ascendant; and, in consequence thereof, laws were enacted, which excluded the ignorant and illiterate from the office of public teachers. The opposite side of the question was not, however, without defenders; and the defects and vices of learned men and philosophers contributed much to increase their number, as will appear in the progress of this history.

CHAP. II.

Concerning the doctors and ministers of the church, and the form of its government.

The form of church government.

I. THE form of ecclesiastical government, whose commencement we have seen in the last century, was brought in this to a greater degree of stability and consistence. One inspector, or *bishop*, presided over each Christian assembly, to which office he was elected by the voices of the whole people. In this post he was to be watchful and provident, attentive to the wants of the church, and careful to supply them. To assist him in this laborious province, he formed a council of *presbyters*, which was not confined to any fixed number, and to each of these he distributed his task, and appointed a station, in which he was to promote the interests of the church. To the bishops and presbyters, the ministers, or *deacons* were subject; and the latter were divided into a variety of classes, as the different exigencies of the church required.

Association of the provincial churches.

II. During a greater part of this century, the Christian churches were independent on each other; nor were they joined together by association, confederacy, or any other bonds but those of charity. Each Christian assembly was a little

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state, governed by its own laws, which were either enacted, or, at least, approved by the society. But, in process of time, all the Christian churches of a province were formed into one large ecclesiastical body, which, like confederate states, assembled at certain times, in order to deliberate about the common interests of the whole. This institution had its origin among the Greeks, with whom nothing was more common than this confederacy of independent states, and the regular assemblies which met, in consequence thereof, at fixed times, and were composed of the deputies of each repective state. But these ecclesiastical associations were not long confined to the Greeks; their great utility was no sooner perceived, than they became universal, and were formed in all places where the gospel had been planted [o]. To these assemblies, in which the deputies or commissioners of several churches consulted together, the name of *synods* was appropriated by the Greeks, and that of *councils* by the Latins; and the laws that were enacted in these general meetings, were called *canons*, i. e. *rules*.

Origin of councils.

The authority of the bishops augmented by these councils.

III. These *councils*, of which we find not the smallest trace before the middle of this century, changed the whole face of the church, and gave it a new form; for by them the ancient privileges of the people were considerably diminished, and the power and authority of the bishops greatly augmented. The humility, indeed, and prudence of these pious prelates prevented their assuming all at once the power with which they were afterwards invested. At their first appearance in these general councils, they acknowledged that they were no more than the delegates of their respective churches, and that they acted in the name, and by the appointment of their people. But they soon changed

[o] Tertullian, *Lib. de Jejuniis*, cap. xiii. p. 711.

changed this humble tone, imperceptibly extended the limits of their authority, turned their influence into dominion, and their counsels into laws; and openly asserted, at length, that Christ had empowered them to prescribe to his people *authoritative rules* of *faith* and *manners*. Another effect of these councils was, the gradual abolition of that perfect equality, which reigned among all bishops in the primitive times. For the order and decency of these assemblies required, that some one of the provincial bishops met in council, should be invested with a superior degree of power and authority; and hence the rights of Metropolitans derive their origin. In the mean time, the bounds of the church were enlarged; the custom of holding councils was followed wherever the sound of the gospel had reached; and the universal church had now the appearance of one vast republic, formed by a combination of a great number of little states. This occasioned the creation of a new order of ecclesiastics, who were appointed, in different parts of the world, as heads of the church, and whose office it was to preserve the consistence and union of that immense body, whose members were so widely dispersed throughout the nations. Such was the nature and office of the *patriarchs*, among whom, at length, ambition being arrived at its most insolent period, formed a new dignity, investing the bishop of *Rome*, and his successors, with the title and authority of prince of the patriarchs.

Metropolitans.

IV. The Christian doctors had the good fortune to persuade the people, that the ministers of the Christian church succeeded to the character, rights, and privileges, of the Jewish priesthood: and this persuasion was a new source both of honours and profit to the sacred order. This notion was propagated with industry some time after the reign of Adrian, when the second destruction of

An artful parallel drawn between the Christian and the Jewish priesthood.

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Jerusalem had extinguished among the Jews all hopes of seeing their government restored to its former lustre, and their country arising out of ruins. And, accordingly, the *bishops* considered themselves as invested with a rank and character similar to those of the *high-priest* among the Jews, while the *presbyters* represented the priests, and the *deacons* the *Levites*. It is, indeed, highly probable, that they, who first introduced this absurd comparison of offices, so entirely distinct, did it rather through ignorance and error than through artifice or design. The notion, however, once introduced, produced its natural effects; and these effects were pernicious. The errors to which it gave rise were many; and one of its immediate consequences was, the establishing a greater difference between the Christian pastors and their flock than the genius of the gospel seems to admit.

The principal writers.

V. From the government of the church, let us turn our eyes to those who maintained its cause by their learned and judicious writings. Among these was Justin, a man of eminent piety and considerable learning, who, from a Pagan philosopher, became a Christian martyr. He had frequented all the different sects of philosophy in an ardent and impartial pursuit of truth; and finding, neither among Stoics nor Peripatetics, neither in the Pythagorean nor Platonic schools, any satisfactory account of the perfections of the Supreme Being, and the nature and destination of the human soul, he embraced Christianity on account of the light which it cast upon these interesting subjects. We have yet remaining his two *apologies* in behalf of the Christians, which are most deservedly held in high esteem; notwithstanding that, in some passages of them, he shews himself an unwary disputer, and betrays a want of acquaintance with ancient history.

Irenæus,

Irenæus, bishop of *Lyons*, a Greek by birth, and probably born of Christian parents, a disciple also of Polycarp, by whom he was sent to preach the gospel among the Gauls, is another of the writers of this century, whose labours were singularly useful to the church. He turned his pen against its internal and domestic enemies, by attacking the monstrous errors which were adopted by many of the primitive Christians, as appears by his *five books against heresies*, which are yet preserved in a Latin translation [*p*], and are considered as one of the most precious monuments of ancient erudition.

Athenagoras also deserves a place among the estimable writers of this age. He was a philosopher of no mean reputation, and his *apology* for the Christians, as well as his *treatise upon the resurrection*, affords striking proofs of his learning and genius.

The works of Theophilus, bishop of *Antioch*, are more remarkable for their erudition, than for their order and method; this, at least, is true of his *three books in defence of Christianity*, addressed to Autolycus [*q*]. But the most illustrious writer of this century, and the most justly renowned for his various erudition, and his perfect acquaintance of the ancient sages, was

 Clemens,

☞ [*p*] The first book is yet extant in the original Greek; of the rest, we only have a Latin version, through the barbarity of which, though excessive, it is easy to discern the eloquence and erudition that reign throughout the original. See *Hist. Litteraire de la France.*

☞ [*q*] Theophilus was the author of several works, beside those mentioned by Dr. Mosheim, particularly of a *commentary upon the Proverbs*, another upon the *Four Evangelists*, and of several short and pathetic discourses, which he published from time to time for the use of his flock. He also wrote against Marcion and Hermogenes, and, refuting the errors of these heretics, he quotes several passages of the *Revelations.*

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Clemens, the disciple of Pantænus, and the head of the Alexandrian school, destined for the instruction of the catechumens. His *Stromata*, *Pedagogue*, and *Exhortation*, addressed to the Greeks, which are yet extant, abundantly shew the extent of his learning, and the force of his genius; though he is neither to be admired for the precision of his ideas, nor for the perspicuity of his style. It is also to be lamented, that his excessive attachment to the reigning philosophy led him into a variety of pernicious errors.

Hitherto we have made no mention of the Latin writers, who employed their pens in the Christian cause. And, indeed, the only one of any note, we find in this century, is Tertullian, by birth a Carthaginian, who, having first embraced the profession of the law, became afterwards a presbyter of the church, and concluded by adopting the heretical visions of Montanus. He was a man of extensive learning, of a fine genius, and highly admired for his elocution in the Latin tongue. We have several works of his yet remaining, which were designed to explain and defend the truth, and to nourish pious affections in the hearts of Christians. There was, indeed, such a mixture in the qualities of this man, that it is difficult to fix his real character, and to determine which of the two were predominant, his *virtues*, or his *defects*. He was endowed with a great genius, but seemed deficient in point of judgment. His piety was warm and vigorous, but at the same time, melancholy and austere. His learning was extensive and profound; and yet his credulity and superstition were such as might have been expected from the darkest ignorance. And with respect to his reasonings, they had more of the subtilty that dazzles the imagination,

imagination, than of that solidity that brings light and conviction to the mind [*r*]. CENT. II. PART II.

CHAP. III.

Concerning the doctrine of the Christian church, in this century.

I. THE Christian system, as it was hitherto taught, preserved its native and beautiful simplicity, and was comprehended in a small number of articles. The public teachers inculcated no other doctrines, than those that are contained in what is commonly called the *Apostles' Creed:* and, in the method of illustrating them, all vain subtilties, all mysterious researches, every thing that was beyond the reach of common capacities, were carefully avoided. This will by no means appear surprising to those who consider, that, at this time, there was not the least controversy about those capital doctrines of Christianity, which were afterwards so keenly debated in the church; and who reflect, that the bishops of these primitive times were, for the most part, plain and illiterate men, remarkable rather for their piety and zeal, than for their learning and eloquence. The simplicity of primitive Christianity.

II. This venerable simplicity was not, indeed, of a long duration; its beauty was gradually effaced by the laborious efforts of human learning, Altered by degrees.

[*r*] It is proper to point out to such as are desirous of a more particular account of the works, as also of the excellencies and defects of these ancient writers, the authors who have professedly written concerning them, and the principal are those who follow: Jo. Alb. Fabricius, in *Biblioth. Græc. et Latin.* Cave, *Hist. Litter. Scriptor. Eccl.* Du Pin et Cellier, *Biblioth. des Auters Ecclesiastiques.*

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ing, and the dark subtilties of imaginary science. Acute researches were employed upon several religious subjects, concerning which ingenious decisions were pronounced; and, what was worst of all, several tenets of a chimerical philosophy were imprudently incorporated into the Christian system. This disadvantageous change, this unhappy alteration of the primitive simplicity of the Christian religion, was chiefly owing to two reasons; the one drawn from pride, and the other from a sort of necessity. The former was the eagerness of certain learned men to bring about a union between the doctrines of Christianity, and the opinions of the philosophers; for they thought it a very fine accomplishment, to be able to express the precepts of Christ in the language of *philosophers*, *civilians*, and *rabbins*. The other reason that contributed to alter the simplicity of the Christian religion, was, the necessity of having recourse to logical definitions and nice distinctions, in order to confound the sophistical arguments which the infidel and the heretic employed, the one to overturn the Christian system, and the other to corrupt it. ☞ These philosophical arms, in the hands of the judicious and wise, were both honourable and useful to religion; but when they came to be handled by every ignorant and self-sufficient meddler, as was afterwards the case, they produced nothing but perplexity and confusion, under which genuine Christianity almost disappeared.

This proved by an example.

III. Many examples might be alleged, which verify the observations we have now been making; and, if the reader is desirous of a striking one, he has only to take a view of the doctrines which began to be taught in this century, concerning the state of the soul after the dissolution of the body. Jesus and his disciples had simply declared, that the souls of good men were, at their departure

departure from their bodies, to be received into heaven, while those of the wicked were to be sent to hell; and this was sufficient for the first disciples of Christ to know, as they had more piety than curiosity, and were satisfied with the knowledge of this solemn fact, without any inclination to penetrate its *manner*, or to pry into its secret reasons. But this plain doctrine was soon disguised, when Platonism began to infect Christianity. Plato had taught, that the souls of heroes, of illustrious men, and eminent philosophers alone, ascended after death, into the mansions of light and felicity; while those of the generality, weighed down by their lusts and passions, sunk into the infernal regions, from whence they were not permitted to emerge before they were purified from their turpitude and corruption [*s*]. This doctrine was seized with avidity by the Platonic Christians, and applied as a commentary upon that of Jesus. Hence a notion prevailed, that the *martyrs* only entered upon a state of happiness immediately after death, and that, for the rest, a certain obscure region was assigned, in which they were to be imprisoned until the second coming of Christ, or, at least, until they were purified from their various pollutions. This doctrine, enlarged and improved upon by the irregular fancies of injudicious men, became a source of innumerable errors, vain ceremonies, and monstrous superstitions.

Zeal for the holy Scriptures.

IV. But, however the doctrines of the gospel may have been abused by the commentaries and interpretations of different sects, yet all were unanimous in regarding with veneration the holy Scriptures,

[*s*] See an ample account of the opinions of the Platonics, and other ancient philosophers upon this subject, in the notes which Dr. Mosheim has added to his Latin translation of Cudworth's *Intellectual System*, tom. ii. p. 1036.

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Scriptures, as the great rule of faith and manners; and hence that laudable and pious zeal of adapting them to general use. We have mentioned already the translations that were made of them into different languages, and it will not be improper to say something here concerning those who employed their useful labours in explaining and interpreting them. Pantænus, the head of the Alexandrian school, was probably the first who enriched the church with a version of the sacred writings, which has been lost among the ruins of time. The same fate attended the *commentary* of Clemens the Alexandrian, upon the *canonical epistles;* and also another celebrated work [*t*] of the same author, in which he is said to have explained in a compendious manner, almost all the sacred writings. The *Harmony of the Evangelists*, composed by Tatian, is yet extant. But the *Exposition of the Revelations*, by Justin Martyr, and of the *four gospels* by Theophilus bishop of *Antioch*, together with several illustrations of the Mosaic history of the creation, by other ancient writers, are all lost.

The defects of the ancient interpreters.

V. The loss of these ancient productions is the less to be regretted, as we know, with certainty, their vast inferiority to the expositions of the holy scriptures that appeared in succeeding times. Among the persons already mentioned, there was none who deserved the name of an eminent and judicious interpreter of the sacred text. They all attributed a *double sense* to the words of scripture; the one *obvious* and literal, the other *hidden* and mysterious, which lay concealed, as it were, under the veil of the outward letter. The former they treated with the utmost neglect, and turned the whole force of their genius and application to unfold the latter; or, in other words, they

[*t*] Viz. Clementis *Hypotyposes.*

they were more studious to darken the holy Scriptures with their idle fictions, than to investigate their true and natural sense. Some of them also forced the expressions of sacred writ out of their obvious meaning, in order to apply them to the support of their philosophical systems; of which dangerous and pernicious attempts, Clemens of *Alexandria* is said to have given the first example. With respect to the expositors of the Old Testament in this century, we shall only make this general remark, that their excessive veneration for the Alexandrian version, commonly called the Septuagint, which they regarded almost as of divine authority, confined their views, fettered, as it were, their critical spirit, and hindered them from producing any thing excellent in the way of sacred criticism or interpretation.

Of systematic divinity.

VI. If this age was not very fertile in sacred critics, it was still less so in expositors of the doctrinal parts of religion; for hitherto there was no attempt made, at least that is come to our knowledge, of composing a *system* or complete view of the Christian doctrine. Some treatises of Arabian, relative to this subject, are indeed mentioned; but as they are lost, and seem not to have been much known by any of the writers whose works have survived them, we can form no conclusions concerning them. The books of Papias, concerning *the sayings of* Christ *and his apostles*, were, according to the accounts which Eusebius gives of them, rather an historical commentary, than a theological system. Melito, bishop of *Sardis*, is said to have written several treatises, one concerning *faith*, another on the *creation*, a third concerning the *church*, and a fourth concerning *truth*; but it does not appear from the titles of these writings, whether they were of a doctrinal or controversial nature.

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nature [*u*]. Several of the polemic writers, indeed, have been naturally led, in the course of controversy, to explain amply certain points of religion. But those doctrines, which have not been disputed, are very rarely defined with such accuracy, by the ancient writers, as to point out to us clearly what their opinions concerning them were. And from hence it ought not to appear surprising, that all the different sects of Christians pretend to find, in the writings of the fathers, decisions favourable to their respective tenets.

The controversial writers.

VII. The controversial writers, who shone in this century, had three different sorts of adversaries to combat: the Jews, the Pagans, and those, who, in the bosom of Christianity, corrupted its doctrines, and produced various sects and divisions in the church. Justin Martyr, and Tertullian, embarked in a controversy with the Jews, which it was not possible for them to manage with the highest success and dexterity, as they were very little acquainted with the language, the history, and the learning of the Hebrews, and wrote with more levity and inaccuracy, than was justifiable on such a subject. Of those who managed the cause of Christianity against the Pagans, some performed this important task by composing *apologies* for the Christians; and others by addressing pathetic exhortations to the Gentiles. Among the former were, Athenagoras,

☞ [*u*] Melito, besides his *apology* for the Christians, and the treatises mentioned by Dr. Mosheim here, wrote a discourse upon Esther, and several other dissertations, of which we have only some scattered fragments remaining; but what is worthy of remark here, is, that he is the first Christian writer that has given us a catalogue of the books of the Old Testament. His catalogue, also, is perfectly conformable to that of the Jews, except in this point only, that he has omitted in it the book of *Esther*.

goras, Melito, Quadratus, Miltiades, Aristides, Tatian, and Justin Martyr; and among the latter, Tertullian, Clemens, Justin, and Theophilus bishop of *Antioch*. All these writers attacked, with judgment, dexterity, and success, the Pagan superstition, and also defended the Christians, in a victorious manner, against all the calumnies and aspersions of their enemies. But they did not succeed so well in unfolding the true nature and genius of Christianity, nor were the arguments they made use of to demonstrate its truth and divinity so full of energy, so striking and irresistible as those by which they overturned the Pagan system. In a word, both their explication and defence of many of the doctrines of Christianity are defective and unsatisfactory in several respects. As to those who directed their polemic efforts against the heretics, their number was prodigious, though few of their writings have come down to our times. Irenæus refuted the whole tribe, in a work destined solely for that purpose. Clemens [*w*], Tertullian [*x*], and Justin Martyr, wrote also against all the sectaries; but the work of the last, upon that subject, is not extant. It would be endless to mention those who combated particular errors, of whose writings also, many have disappeared amidst the decays of time and the revolutions that have happened in the republic of letters.

Good and bad qualities of the ancient disputants.

VIII. If the primitive defenders of Christianity were not always happy in the choice of their arguments, yet they discovered more candour and probity than those of the following ages. The artifice of sophistry, and the habit of employing pious frauds in support of the truth, had not, as yet, infected the Christians. And this, indeed, is

[*w*] In his work intitled, *Stromata*.
[*x*] In his *Præscriptiones adversus hæreticos*.

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is all that can be said in their behalf; for they are worthy of little admiration on account of the accuracy or depth of their reasonings. The most of them appear to have been destitute of penetration, learning, order, application and force. They frequently make use of arguments void of all solidity, and much more proper to dazzle the fancy, than to enlighten and convince the mind. One laying aside the sacred writings, from whence all the weapons of religious controversy ought to be drawn, refers to the decisions of those bishops who ruled the apostolic churches. Another thinks, that the antiquity of a doctrine is a mark of its truth, and pleads prescription against his adversaries, as if he was maintaining his property before a civil magistrate; than which method of disputing nothing can be more pernicious to the cause of truth. A third imitates those wrong-headed disputants among the Jews, who, infatuated with their cabalistic jargon, offered, as arguments, the imaginary *powers* of certain mystic words and chosen numbers [*y*]. Nor do they seem to err, who are of opinion, that in this century, that vicious method [*z*] of disputing, which afterwards obtained the name of *œconomical*, was first introduced [*a*].

Moral writers.

IX. The principal points of morality were treated by Justin Martyr, or, at least, by the writer

[*y*] Several examples of this senseless method of reasoning, are to be found in different writers. See particularly Basnage, *Histoire des Juifs*, tom. iii. p. 660. 694.

☞ [*z*] The *œconomical* method of disputing was that in which the disputants accommodated themselves as far as was possible, to the taste and prejudices of those whom they were endeavouring to gain over to the truth. Some of the first Christians carried this condescension too far, and abused St. Paul's example (1 Cor. ix. 20, 21, 22.) to a degree inconsistent with the purity and simplicity of the Christian doctrine.

[*a*] Rich. Simon, *Histoire Critique des principaux Commentateurs du N. T.* cap. ii. p. 21.

writer of the *epistle to* Zena *and* Serenus, which is to be found among the works of that celebrated author. Many other writers confined themselves to particular branches of the moral system, which they handled with much attention and zeal. Thus Clemens of *Alexandria*, wrote several treatises concerning *calumny*, *patience*, *continence*, and other virtues, which discourses have not reached our times. Those of Tertullian upon *chastity*, upon *flight in the time of persecution*, as also upon *fasting*, *shows*, *female ornaments*, and *prayer*, have survived the waste of time, and might be read with much fruit, were the style in which they are written, less laboured and difficult, and the spirit they breathe less melancholy and morose.

Of the merit of the fathers, as moral writers.

X. Learned men are not unanimous concerning the degree of esteem that is due to the authors now mentioned, and the other ancient moralists. Some represent them as the most excellent guides in the paths of piety and virtue; while others place them in the very lowest rank of moral writers, consider them as the very worst of all instructors, and treat their precepts and decisions as perfectly insipid, and, in many respects, pernicious. We leave the determination of this point to such as are more capable of pronouncing decisively upon it, than we pretend to be [*b*]. It, however, appears to us incontestable, that, in the writings

[*b*] This question was warmly and learnedly debated between the deservedly celebrated Barbeyrac and Cellier, a Benedictin monk. Buddeus has given us an history of this controversy, with his own judgment of it, in his *Isagoge ad Theologiam*, lib. ii. cap. iv. p. 620, &c. Barbeyrac, however, published after this a particular treatise in defence of the severe sentence he had pronounced against the *fathers*. This ingenious performance was printed at *Amsterdam* in 1720, under the title of *Traité sua la Morale des Peres;* and is highly worthy of the perusal of those who have a taste for this most interesting branch of literature, though they will find in it some imputations cast upon the fathers, against which they may be easily defended.

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writings of the primitive fathers, there are several sublime sentiments, judicious thoughts, and many things that are naturally adapted to form a religious temper, and to excite pious and virtuous affections; while it must be confessed, on the other hand, that they abound still more with precepts of an excessive and unreasonable austerity, with stoical and academical dictates, vague and indeterminate notions, and what is yet worse, with decisions that are absolutely false, and in evident opposition to the precepts of Christ. Before the question mentioned above, concerning the merit of the ancient fathers, as moralists, be decided, a previous question must be determined, *viz.* What is meant by a bad director in point of morals? and, if by such a person be meant, one who has no determinate notion of the nature and limits of the duties incumbent upon Christians, no clear and distinct ideas of virtue and vice; who has not penetrated the spirit and genius of those sacred books, to which alone we must appeal in every dispute about Christian virtue, and who, in consequence thereof, fluctuates often in uncertainty, or falls into error in explaining the divine laws, though he may frequently administer sublime and pathetic instructions; if, by a bad guide in morals, such a person, as we have now delineated, be meant, then it must be confessed, that this title belongs indisputably to many of the fathers.

The double doctrine of certain moralists.

XI. The causes of morality, and, indeed, of Christianity in general, suffered deeply by a capital error which was received in this century; an error admitted without any evil design, but yet with the utmost imprudence, and which, through every period of the church, even until the present time, has produced other errors without number, and multiplied the evils under which the gospel has so often groaned. Jesus Christ prescribed

to

to all his disciples one and the same rule of life and manners. But certain Christian doctors, either through a desire of imitating the nations among whom they lived, or in consequence of a natural propensity to a life of austerity (which is a disease not uncommon in *Syria*, *Egypt*, and other Eastern provinces), were induced to maintain, that Christ had established a *double rule of sanctity and virtue*, for two different orders of Christians. Of these *rules* the *one* was ordinary, the *other* extraordinary; the *one* of a lower dignity, the *other* more sublime; the *one* for persons in the active scenes of life, the *other* for those, who, in a sacred retreat, aspired after the glory of a celestial state. In consequence of this wild system, they divided into two parts all those moral doctrines and instructions which they had received, either by writing or tradition. One of these divisions, they called *precepts*, and the other *counsels*. They gave the name of *precepts* to those laws that were universally obligatory upon all orders of men; and that of *counsels* to those that related to Christians of a more sublime rank, who proposed to themselves great and glorious ends, and breathed after an intimate communion with the Supreme Being.

Given rise to the Ascetics.

XII. This *double doctrine* produced, all of a sudden, a new set of men, who made profession of uncommon degrees of sanctity and virtue, and declared their resolution of obeying all the *counsels* of Christ, in order to their enjoying communion with God here; and also, that, after the dissolution of their mortal bodies, they might ascend to him with the greater facility, and find nothing to retard their approach to the supreme centre of happiness and perfection. They looked upon themselves as prohibited the use of things which it was lawful for other Christians to enjoy, such as

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wine, flesh, matrimony, and *commerce* [*c*]. They thought it their indispensible duty, to extenuate the body by watchings, abstinence, labour, and hunger. They looked for felicity in solitary retreats, in desert places, where, by severe and assiduous efforts of sublime meditation, they raised the soul above all external objects, and all sensual pleasures. Both men and women imposed upon themselves the most severe tasks, the most austere discipline; all which, however, the fruit of pious intention, was in the issue extremely detrimental to Christianity. These persons were called Ascetics, Σπουδαῖοι Ἐκλεκτοί, and philosophers; nor were they only distinguished by their title from other Christians, but also by their garb [*d*]. In this century, indeed, such as embraced this austere kind of life submitted themselves to all these mortifications in private, without breaking asunder their social bonds, or withdrawing themselves from the concourse of men. But, in process of time, they retired into deserts; and, after the example of the Essenes and Therapeutæ, they formed themselves into certain companies.

Why certain Christians became Ascetics.

XIII. Nothing is more obvious than the reasons that gave rise to this austere sect. One of the principal was, the ill-judged ambition of the Christians to resemble the Greeks and Romans, many of whose sages and philosophers distinguished themselves from the generality by their maxims, by their habit, and, indeed, by the whole plan of life and manners which they had formed to themselves, and by which they acquired a high degree of esteem and authority. It is also well known, that, of all these philosophers, there

[*c*] Athenagoras, *Apologia pro Christian.* cap. xxviii. p. 129. edit. Oxon.

[*d*] See Salmas. *Comm. in Tertullianum de Pallio,* p. 7, 8, &c.

there were none, whose sentiments and discipline were so well received by the ancient Christians as those of the Platonics and Pythagoreans, who prescribed in their lessons *two* rules of conduct; *one* for the sages, who aspired to the sublimest heights of virtue; and *another* for the people, involved in the cares and hurry of an active life [*e*]. The law of moral conduct, which the Platonics prescribed to the philosophers, was as follows: "The soul "of the wise man ought to be removed to the "greatest possible distance from the contagious "influence of the body. And as the depressing "weight of the body, the force of its appetites, "and its connections with a corrupt world, are "in direct opposition to this sacred obligation; "therefore all sensual pleasures are to be care-"fully avoided; the body is to be supported, or "rather extenuated, by a slender diet; *solitude* is "to be sought as the true mansion of virtue; and "*contemplation* to be employed as the means of "raising the soul, as far as is possible, to a sub-"lime freedom from all corporeal ties, and to a "noble elevation above all terrestrial things [*f*]. "The person who lives in this manner, shall "enjoy, even in the present state, a certain de-"gree of communion with the Deity; and when "the corporeal mass is dissolved, shall imme-

 "diately

[*e*] These famous sects made an important distinction between *living according to nature*, ζῆν κατὰ φύσιν, and *living above nature*, ζῆν ὑπὲρ φύσιν. The former was the rule prescribed to the vulgar; the latter, that which was to direct the conduct of the philosophers, who aimed at superior degrees of virtue. See Enæas Gazeus *in Theophrast.* p. 29. edit. Barthii.

[*f*] The reader will find the principles of this fanatical discipline, in Porphyry's book περὶ ἀποχῆς, i. e. concerning *abstinence*. That celebrated Platonist has explained at large the respective duties that belong to *active* and *contemplative* life, book i. sect. 27. and 41.

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" diately ascend to the sublime regions of felicity " and perfection, without passing through that " state of purification and trial, that awaits the " generality of mankind." It is easy to perceive that this rigorous discipline was a natural consequence of the peculiar opinions which these philosophers, and some others that resembled them, entertained concerning the *nature of the soul*, the *influence of matter*, *the operations of invisible beings, or demons*, and the *formation of the world*. And as these opinions were adopted by the more learned among the Christians, it was but natural that they should embrace also the moral discipline which flowed from them.

The progress of this discipline.

XIV. There is a particular consideration that will enable us to render a natural account of the origin of those religious severities of which we have been now speaking, and that is drawn from the genius and temper of the people by whom they were first practised. It was in *Egypt* that this morose discipline had its rise; and it is observable, that that country has, in all times, as it were by an immutable law, or disposition of nature, abounded with persons of a melancholy complexion, and produced, in proportion to its extent, more gloomy spirits than any other part of the world [*g*]. It was here that the Essenes and the Therapeutæ, those dismal and gloomy sects, dwelt principally, long before the coming of Christ: as also many others of the Ascetic tribe, who, led by a certain melancholy turn of mind, and a delusive notion of rendering themselves more acceptable to the Deity by their austerities, withdrew themselves from human society, and from all the innocent pleasures and comforts of life,

[*g*] See Maillet, *Description de l' Egypte*, tom. ii. p. 57. edit. in 4to. de Paris.

life [*h*]. From *Egypt*, this sour and unsociable discipline passed into *Syria*, and the neighbouring countries, which also abounded with persons of the same dismal constitution with that of the Egyptians [*i*]; and from thence, in process of time, its infection reached to the European nations. Hence that train of austere and superstitious vows and rites, that yet, in many places, cast a veil over the beauty and simplicity of the Christian religion. Hence the celibacy of the priestly order, the rigour of unprofitable penances and mortifications, the innumerable swarms of monks that refused their talents and labours to society, and this in the senseless pursuit of a visionary sort of perfection. Hence also that distinction between the *theoretical* and *mystical* life, and many other fancies of a like nature, which we shall have occasion to mention in the course of this history.

The rise of pious frauds among Christians.

XV. It is generally true, that delusions travel in a train, and that one mistake produces many. The Christians who adopted the austere system, which has been already mentioned, had certainly made a very false step, and done much injury to their excellent and most reasonable religion. But they did not stop here; another erroneous practice was adopted by them, which, though it was not so universal as the other, was yet extremely pernicious, and proved a source of numberless evils to the Christian church. The Platonists and Pythagoreans held it as a maxim, that it was

[*h*] Herodot. *Histor.* lib. ii. p. 104. edit. Gronov. Epiphanius, *Exposit. fidei*, sect. 11. tom. ii. opp. p. 1092. Tertullian, *De exhortatione castitat*, cap. xiii. p. 524. edit. Priorii. Athanasius *in vita Antonii*, tom. ii. opp. p. 453.

[*i*] Jo. Chardin *Voyages en Perse*, tom. iv. p. 197. edit. Amsterd. 1735, 4to.

not only lawful, but even praise-worthy, to *deceive*, and even to use the expedient of a *lie*, in order to advance the cause of *truth* and *piety*. The Jews, who lived in *Egypt*, had learned and received this maxim from them, before the coming of Christ, as appears incontestably from a multitude of ancient records; and the Christians were infected from both these sources with the same pernicious error, as appears from the number of books attributed falsely to great and venerable names, from the *Sibylline verses*, and several suppositious productions which were spread abroad in this and the following century. It does not indeed seem probable, that all these *pious frauds* were chargeable upon the professors of *real* Christianity, upon those who entertained just and rational sentiments of the religion of Jesus. The greatest part of these fictitious writings, undoubtedly flowed from the fertile invention of the Gnostic sects, though it cannot be affirmed that even true Christians were entirely innocent and irreproachable in this matter.

Of the lives of Christians.

XVI. As the boundaries of the church were enlarged, the number of vicious and irregular persons who entered into it, were proportionably increased, as appears from the many complaints and censures that we find in the writers of this century. Several methods were made use of to stem the torrent of iniquity. *Excommunication* was peculiarly employed to prevent or punish the most heinous and enormous crimes; and the crimes, esteemed such, were *murder*, *idolatry*, and *adultery*, which terms, however, we must here understand in their more full and extensive sense. In some places, the commission of any of these sins cut off irrevocably the criminal from all hopes of restoration to the privileges of church-communion: in others, after a long, laborious, and

Excommunication.

and painful course of probation and discipline, they were re-admitted into the bosom of the church [*k*].

Penitential discipline among the Christians modelled imperceptibly according to that of the Heathen mysteries.

XVII. It is here to be attentively observed, that the form used in the exclusion of heinous offenders from the society of Christians was, at first, extremely simple. A small number of plain, yet judicious rules, made up the whole of this solemn institution, which, however, was imperceptibly altered, enlarged by an addition of a vast multitude of rites, and new-modelled according to the discipline used in the Heathen mysteries [*l*]. Those who have any acquaintance with the singular reasons that obliged the Christians of those ancient times to be careful in restraining the progress of vice, will readily grant, that it was incumbent upon the rulers of the church to perfect their discipline, and to render the restraints upon iniquity more severe. They will justify the rulers of the primitive church in their refusing to restore excommunicated members to their forfeited privileges, before they had given incontestable marks of the sincerity of their repentance. Yet still it remains to be examined, whether it was expedient to borrow from the enemies of the truth the rules of this salutary discipline, and thus to sanctify, in some measure, a part of the Heathen superstition. But, however delicate such a question may be, when determined with a view to all the indirect or immediate consequences of the matter in debate, the equitable and candid judge will consider prin-

[*k*] By this distinction, we may easily reconcile the different opinions of the learned concerning the effects of excommunication. See Morinus, *De disciplina Pœnitent.* lib. ix. cap. xix. p. 670. Sirmond, *Historia Pœnitentia publicæ,* cap. i. p. 322. tom. iv. opp. As also Joseph. Augustin. Orsi, *Dissert. de criminum capitalium per tria priora sæcula absolutione,* published at *Milan,* 1730, 4to.

[*l*] See Fabricius' *Bibliograph. Antiquar.* p. 397. and Morinus, *De Pœnitentia,* lib. i. cap. xv, xvi, &c.

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cipally the good intention of those from whom these ceremonies and institutions proceed, and will overlook the rest from a charitable condescension and indulgence to human weakness.

CHAP. IV.

Of the ceremonies used in the church during this century.

Ceremonies multiplied.

I. THERE is no institution so pure and excellent which the corruption and folly of man will not in time alter for the worse, and load with additions foreign to its nature and original design. Such, in a particular manner, was the fate of Christianity. In this century, many unnecessary rites and ceremonies were added to the Christian worship, the introduction of which was extremely offensive to wise and good men [*m*]. These changes, while they destroyed the beautiful simplicity of the gospel, were naturally pleasing to the gross multitude, who are more delighted with the pomp and splendor of external institutions, than with the native charms of rational and solid piety, and who generally give little attention to any objects but those which strike their outward senses [*n*]. But other reasons may

[*m*] Tertullian, *Lib. de Creatione*, p. 792. opp.

☞ [*n*] It is not improper to remark here, that this attachment of the vulgar to the pomp of ceremonies, is a circumstance that has always been favourable to the ambitious views of the Romish clergy, since the pomp of religion naturally casts a part of its glory and magnificence upon its ministers, and thereby gives them, imperceptibly, a vast ascendant over the minds of the people. The late Lord *Bolingbroke*, being present at the elevation of the host in the cathedral at *Paris*, expressed to a nobleman who stood near him, his surprise that the king of *France* should commit the performance of such an august and striking ceremony to any subject. How far ambition

may be added to this, which, though they suppose no bad intention, yet manifest a considerable degree of precipitation and imprudence.

First reasons of the multiplication of ceremonies, viz. A desire to enlarge the borders of the church.

II. And here we may observe, in the first place, that there is a high degree of probability in the notion of those who think, that the bishops augmented the number of religious rites in the Christian worship, by way of accommodation to the infirmities and prejudices both of Jews and heathens, in order to facilitate thus their conversion to Christianity. Both Jews and heathens were accustomed to a vast variety of pompous and magnificent ceremonies in their religious service. And as they considered these rites as an essential part of religion, it was but natural that they should behold with indifference, and even with contempt, the simplicity of the Christian worship, which was destitute of those idle ceremonies that rendered their service so specious and striking. To remove then, in some measure, this prejudice against Christianity, the bishops thought it necessary to increase the number of rites and ceremonies, and thus to render the public worship more striking to the outward senses [*o*].

III. This

bition may, in this and the succeeding ages, have contributed to the accumulation of gaudy ceremonies, is a question not easy to be determined.

[*o*] A remarkable passage in the life of Gregory, surnamed Thaumaturgus, *i. e.* the wonder worker, will illustrate this point in the clearest manner. The passage is as follows: "Cum animadvertisset (Gregorius) quod ob corpo-
"reas delectationes et voluptates simplex et imperitum vulgus
"in simulacrorum cultus errore permaneret—permisit eis, ut
"in memoriam et recordationem sanctorum martyrum sese
"oblectarent, & in lætitium effunderentur, quod successu
"temporis aliquando futurum esset, ut sua sponte ad ho-
"nestiorem et accuratiorem vitæ rationem transirent." *i. e.*
"When Gregory perceived that the ignorant multitude per-
"sisted in their idolatry, on account of the pleasures and
"sensual gratifications which they enjoyed at the Pagan
"festivals, he granted them a permission to indulge them-
"selves

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III. This addition of external rites was also designed to remove the opprobrious calumnies which the Jewish and pagan priests cast upon the Christians, on account of the simplicity of their worship, esteeming them little better than Atheists, because they had no *temples, altars, victims, priests*, nor any thing of that external pomp in which the vulgar are so prone to place the essence of religion. The rulers of the church adopted, therefore, certain external ceremonies, that thus they might captivate the senses of the vulgar, and be able to refute the reproaches of their adversaries. ☞This, it must be confessed, was a very awkward, and, indeed, a very pernicious stratagem; it was obscuring the native lustre of the gospel, in order to extend its influence, and making it lose in point of real excellence, what it gained in point of popular esteem. Some accommodations to the infirmities of mankind, some prudent instances of condescension to their invincible prejudices, are necessary in ecclesiastical, as well as in civil institutions; but they must be of such a nature, as not to inspire ideas, or encourage prejudices incompatible with just sentiments of the great object of religious worship, and of the fundamental truths which God has imparted by reason and revelation to the human race. How far this rule has been disregarded and violated, will appear too plainly in the progress of this history.

Second reason, To refute calumnies and reproaches.

IV. A third cause of the multiplication of rites and ceremonies in the Christian church, may be deduced

Third reason. The abuse of Jewish rites.

" selves in the like pleasures, in celebrating the memory of the " holy martyrs, hoping, that, in process of time, they would " return, of their own accord, to a more virtuous and regular " course of life." There is no sort of doubt, but that, by this permission, Gregory allowed the Christians to dance, sport, and feast at the tombs of the martyrs, upon their respective festivals, and to do every thing which the pagans were accustomed to do in their temples, during the feast celebrated in honour of their gods.

deduced from the abuse of certain titles that distinguished the sacerdotal orders among the Jews. Every one knows, that many terms used in the New Testament, to express the different parts of the Christian doctrine and worship, are borrowed from the Jewish law, or have a certain analogy with the rights and ceremonies instituted by Moses. The Christian doctors did not only imitate this analogical manner of speaking, but they even extended it further than the apostles had done. And, though in this there was nothing worthy of reproach, yet the consequences of this method of speaking became, through abuse, detrimental to the purity of the gospel. For, in process of time, many asserted, whether through ignorance or artifice, is not easy to determine, that these forms of speech were not *figurative*, but highly *proper*, and exactly suitable to the nature of the things they were designed to express. The *bishops*, by an innocent allusion to the Jewish manner of speaking, had been called *chief priests;* the *elders*, or presbyters, had received the title of *priests*, and the *deacons* that of *Levites*. But, in a little time, these titles were abused by an aspiring clergy, who thought proper to claim the same rank and station, the same rights and privileges, that were conferred with those titles upon the ministers of religion under the Mosaic dispensation. Hence the rise of *tithes*, *first fruits*, *splendid garments*, and many other circumstances of external grandeur, by which ecclesiastics were eminently distinguished. In like manner the comparison of the Christian *oblation* with the Jewish *victims* and *sacrifices*, produced a multitude of unnecessary rites, and was the occasion of introducing that erroneous notion of the *eucharist*, which represents it as a *real sacrifice*, and not merely as a commemoration of that great *offering*, that was once made upon the cross for the sins of mortals.

V. The

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Fourth reason, The imitation of the Heathen mysteries.

V. The profound respect that was paid to the Greek and Roman *mysteries*, and the extraordinary sanctity that was attributed to them, was a further circumstance that induced the Christians to give their religion a *mystic air*, in order to put it upon an equal foot, in point of dignity, with that of the Pagans. For this purpose, they gave the name of *mysteries* to the institutions of the gospel, and decorated particularly the holy sacrament with that solemn title. They used in that sacred institution, as also in that of baptism, several of the terms employed in the Heathen *mysteries;* and proceeded so far, at length, as even to adopt some of the rites and ceremonies of which these renowned *mysteries* consisted [*p*]. This imitation began in the eastern provinces; but after the time of Adrian, who first introduced the Mysteries among the Latins [*q*], it was followed by the Christians, who dwelt in the western parts of the empire. A great part, therefore, of the service of the church, in this century, had a certain air of the heathen mysteries, and resembled them considerably in many particulars.

Fifth reason, The symbolic manner of teaching in use among the eastern nations.

VI. It may be yet further observed, that the custom of teaching their religious doctrines by *images*, *actions*, *signs*, and other sensible representations which prevailed among the Egyptians, and, indeed, in almost all the eastern nations, was another cause of the increase of external rites in the church. As there were many persons of narrow capacities, whose comprehension scarcely extended beyond sensible objects, the Christian doctors thought it adviseable to instruct such in the essential

[*p*] See, for many examples of this, Isaac Casaubon, *Exercitat.* xvi. *in Annales Barronii*, p. 478-9, &c. edit. Genev. 1654. Tollius, *Insign. itineris Italici Not.* p. 151. 163. Spanheim's notes to his French translation of Julian's *Cæsars*, p. 133, 134. Clarkson *on Liturgies*, p. 36. 42, 43.

[*q*] Spartian, *Hadrian*, c. xiii. p. 15. edit. of Obrecht.

tial truths of the gospel, by placing these truths as it were, before their eyes, under sensible images. Thus they administered *milk* and *honey*, which was the ordinary food of infants, to such as were newly received into the church, shewing them by this sign, that by their baptism they were born again, and were bound to manifest the simplicity and innocence of infants in their lives and conversations. Certain military rites were borrowed to express the new and solemn engagements, by which Christians attached themselves to Christ as their leader and their chief; and the ancient ceremony of *manumission* was used to signify the liberty of which they were made partakers, in consequence of their redemption from the guilt and dominion of sin, and their deliverance from the empire of the prince of darkness [*r*].

Sixth reason, Prejudices of converted Jews and Gentiles.

VII. If it be considered, in the first place, that the Christians who composed the church, were Jews and Heathens, accustomed, from their birth, to various insignificant ceremonies and superstitious rites; and if it be also considered, that such a long course of custom and education forms prejudices that are extremely obstinate and difficult to be conquered, it will then appear, that nothing less than a continued miracle could have totally prevented the entrance of all superstitious mixtures into the Christian worship. A single example will tend to the illustration of this matter. Before the coming of Christ, all the eastern nations performed divine worship with their faces turned to that part of the heavens where the sun displays his rising beams. This custom was founded upon a general opinion, that God, whose *essence* they looked upon to be *light*, and whom they considered to be circumscribed within certain limits, dwelt in that part of the firmament, from whence he

[*r*] See Edm. Merillii. *Observat.* lib. iii. cap. iii.

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he sends forth the sun, the bright image of his benignity and glory. They, who embraced the Christian religion, rejected, indeed, this gross error, but they retained the ancient and universal custom of worshipping towards the east, which sprung from it. Nor is that custom abolished even in our times, but still prevails in a great number of Christian churches. From this same source arose various rites among the Jews, which many Christians, especially those who live in the eastern countries, observe religiously at this very day [*s*].

Of the Christian assemblies.

VIII. We shall take no more than a brief view of these rites and ceremonies, since a particular consideration of them would lead us into endless discussions, and open a field too vast to be comprehended in such a compendious history as we here give of the Christian church. The first Christians assembled for the purposes of divine worship, in *private houses*, in *caves*, and in *vaults*, where the dead were buried. Their meetings were on the *first day of the week*; and, in some places, they assembled also upon the *seventh*, which was celebrated by the Jews. Many also observed the *fourth* day of the week, on which Christ was betrayed; and the *sixth*, which was the day of his crucifixion. The hour of the day appointed for holding these religious assemblies, varied according to the different times and circumstances of the church; but it was generally in the evening after sun-set, or in the morning before the dawn. During these sacred meetings, prayers were repeated [*t*], the holy scriptures were publicly read, short

[*s*] See Spencer, *De legibus ritualibus Hebræorum. Prolegom*, p. 9. edit. Cambridge.

[*t*] There is an excellent account given of these prayers and of the Christian worship in general, in Tertullian's *Apology*, chap. xxxix. which is one of the most noble productions of ancient times.

short discourses, upon the duties of Christians, were addressed to the people, hymns were sung, and a portion of the *oblations*, presented by the faithful, was employed in the celebration of the Lord's Supper and the feasts of charity.

Disputes about the time of keeping Easter, or the paschal feast.

IX. The Christians of this century celebrated anniversary festivals in commemoration of the death and resurrection of Christ, and of the effusion of the Holy Ghost, upon the apostles. The day which was observed as the anniversary of Christ's death, was called the *paschal* day, or passover, because it was looked upon to be the same with that on which the Jews celebrated the feast of that name. In the manner, however, of observing this solemn day, the Christians of the *Lesser Asia* differed much from the rest, and in a more especial manner from those of *Rome*. They both indeed, fasted during the *great week*, (so that was called in which Christ died) and afterwards celebrated, like the Jews, a sacred feast, at which they distributed a paschal lamb in memory of our Saviour's last supper. But the Asiatic Christians kept this feast on the fourteenth day of the first Jewish month, at the time that the Jews celebrated their passover, and, three days after, commemorated the resurrection of the triumphant Redeemer. They affirmed, that they had derived this custom from the apostles John and Philip; and pleaded, moreover, in its behalf, the example of Christ himself, who held his *paschal feast* on the same day that the Jews celebrated their *passover*. The western churches observed a different method: They celebrated their *paschal* feast on the night that preceded the anniversary of Christ's resurrection, and thus connected the commemoration of the Saviour's crucifixion, with that of his victory over death and the grave. Nor did they differ thus from the Asiatics, without alleging also apostolic authority for what they did: for they pleaded that

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that of St. Peter and St. Paul, as a justification of their conduct in this matter.

The occasion of them, and their progress.

X. The Asiatic rule for keeping the *paschal feast*, was attended with two great inconveniences, to which the Christians at *Alexandria* and *Rome*, and the whole western churches refused to submit. For, in the first place, as the Asiatics celebrated their festival the same day that Christ is said to have ate the paschal lamb with his disciples, this occasioned an inevitable interruption in the fast of the *great week*, which the other churches looked upon as almost criminal, at least as highly indecent. Nor was this the only inconveniency arising from this rule; for as they celebrated the memory of Christ's resurrection, precisely the third day after their paschal supper, it happened, for the most part, that this great festival (which afterwards was called by the Latins, *pascha*, and to which we give the name of *Easter*) was held on other days of the week than the *first*. This circumstance was extremely displeasing to by far the greatest part of the Christians, who thought it unlawful to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord on any day but *Sunday*, as that was the day on which this glorious event happened. Hence arose sharp and vehement contentions between the Asiatic and western Christians. About the middle of this century, during the reign of Antoninus Pius, the venerable Polycarp came to *Rome* to confer with Anicet, bishop of that see, upon this matter, with a view to terminate the warm disputes it had occasioned. But this conference, though conducted with great decency and moderation, was without effect. Polycarp and Anicet were only agreed in this, that the bonds of charity were not to be broken on account of this controversy; but they continued, at the same time, each in their former sentiments, nor could the Asiatics be engaged by any arguments to alter the

the rule which they pretended to have received by tradition from St. John [*u*].

They prevail principally between the Asiatics and Romans.

XI. Towards the conclusion of this century, Victor, bishop of *Rome*, took it into his head to force the Asiatic Christians, by the pretended authority of his laws and decrees, to follow the rule which was observed by the western churches in this matter. Accordingly, after having taken the advice of some foreign bishops, he wrote an imperious letter to the Asiatic prelates, commanding them to imitate the example of the western Christians with respect to the time of celebrating the festival of Easter. The Asiatics answered this lordly summons by the pen of Polycrates, bishop of *Ephesus*, who declared in their name, and that with great spirit and resolution, that they would by no means depart, in this matter, from the custom handed down to them by their ancestors. Upon this the thunder of excommunication began to roar. Victor, exasperated by this resolute answer of the Asiatic bishops, broke communion with them, pronounced them unworthy of the name of his brethren, and excluded them from all fellowship with the church of *Rome*. This excommunication, indeed, extended no further; nor could it cut off the Asiatic bishops from communion with the other churches, whose bishops were far from approving the conduct of Victor [*w*]. The progress of this violent dissension was stopped by the wise and moderate remonstrances, which Irenæus, bishop of *Lyons*, addressed to the Roman prelate upon this occasion, in which he shewed him the imprudence and injustice

[*u*] Eusebius *Hist. Eccles.* lib. iv. cap. xiv. p. 126. and lib. v. cap. xxiv. p. 193.

[*w*] This whole affair furnishes a striking argument, among the multitude that may be drawn from ecclesiastical history, against the supremacy and universal authority of the bishop of Rome.

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justice of the step he had taken, and also by the long letter which the Asiatic Christians wrote in their own justification. In consequence therefore of this cessation of arms, the combatants retained each their own customs, until the fourth century, when the council of *Nice* abolished that of the Asiatics, and rendered the time of the celebration of Easter the same through all the Christian churches [*x*].

The celebration of the Lord's supper.

XII. In these times, the sacrament of the Lord's supper was celebrated, for the most part, on Sundays, and the ceremonies observed upon that occasion were such as follow: A part of the bread and wine, which was presented among the other *oblations* of the faithful, was separated from the rest, and consecrated by the prayers of the bishop. The wine was mixed with water, and the bread was divided into several portions. A part of the consecrated bread and wine was carried to the sick or absent members of the church, as a testimony of fraternal love, sent to them by the whole society [*y*]. It appears by many and undoubted testimonies, that this holy rite was looked upon as essential to salvation; and when this is duly considered, we shall be less disposed to censure, as erroneous, the opinion of those who have affirmed that the Lord's supper was administered

☞ [*x*] Dr. Mosheim, in a note here, refers us for an ampler account of this controversy to his *Commentar. de rebus Christianorum ante Constantinum, M.* p. 435. He had said in that work, that Faydit had perceived the error of the common opinion, concerning the disputes that arose in the church about the time of keeping Easter. But here he retracts this encomium, and after a second reading of Faydit's book, finds himself obliged to declare that the writer has entirely missed the true state of the question. See the account of this controversy, that is given by the learned Heuman, in one of the treatises of his *Sylloge*, or collection of small pieces.

[*y*] Henricus Rixnerus, *De ritibus veterum Christianorum, circa Eucharistiam*, p. 155, &c.

ministered to infants during this century [z]. The *feasts of charity*, that followed the celebration of the Lord's Supper, have been mentioned already.

Baptism.

XIII. The sacrament of *baptism* was administered publicly twice every year, at the festivals of Easter and Pentecost, or Whitsuntide [a], either by the *bishop* or the *presbyters*, in consequence of his authorization and appointment. The persons that were to be baptized, after they had repeated the *Creed*, confessed and renounced their sins, and particularly the *devil*, and his pompous allurements, were immersed under water, and received into Christ's kingdom by a solemn invocation of *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost*, according to the express command of our Blessed Lord. After baptism, they received the *sign of the cross*, were *anointed*, and by *prayers*, and *imposition of hands*, were solemnly commended to the mercy of God, and dedicated to his service; in consequence of which they received *milk* and *honey*, which concluded the ceremony [b]. The reasons of this particular ritual coincide with what we have said in general concerning the origin and causes of the multiplied ceremonies that crept from time to time into the church.

Adult persons were prepared for baptism by abstinence, prayer, and other pious exercises. It was to answer for them that sponsors, or godfathers, were first instituted, though they were afterwards admitted also in the baptism of infants [c].

[z] See Jo. Frid. Mayer, *Diss. de Eucharistia Infantum;* as also Zornius *Histor. Eucharist Infantum,* published at *Berlin,* 1736.

[a] See Wall's *History of Infant Baptism;* and Vicecome's *De ritibus Baptismi.*

[b] See Tertullian on Baptism.

[c] See Gerh. a Mastricht, *De susceptoribus infantium ex baptismo;* though he is of a different opinion in this matter, and thinks that *sponsors* were not used in the baptism of adult persons.

CHAP. V.

Concerning the Heresies and Divisions that troubled the Church during this century.

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I. AMONG the many sects which divided the Christian church during this century, it is natural to mention, in the first place, that which an attachment to the Mosaic law separated from the rest of their Christian brethren. The first rise of this sect is placed under the reign of Adrian. For, when this emperor had, at length, razed *Jerusalem*, entirely destroyed even its very foundations, and enacted laws of the severest kind against the whole body of the Jewish people; the greatest part of the Christians, who lived in *Palestine*, to prevent their being confounded with the Jews, abandoned entirely the Mosaic rites, and chose a bishop named Mark, a foreigner by nation, and consequently an alien from the commonwealth of *Israel*. This step was highly shocking to those, whose attachment to the Mosaic rites was violent and invincible; and such was the case of many. These, therefore, separated themselves from the brethren, and founded at *Pera*, a country of *Palestine*, and in the neighbouring parts, particular assemblies, in which the law of Moses maintained its primitive dignity, authority, and lustre [*d*].

Dissensions in the church, occasioned by the Jews.

II. This body of judaizing Christians, which set Christ and Moses upon an equal foot in point

Origin of the Nazarenes and Ebionites.

persons. See also Wall's *History of Infant Baptism.* ☞ See moreover, upon this subject, Isaaci Jundt, *Arg. de Susceptorum Baptismalium origine Commentatio*, published at *Strasburg* in the year 1755, of which an account may be seen in the *Biblioth. des Sciences et des Beaux Arts*, tom. vi. part i. p. 13.

[*d*] Vid Sulpitius Severus, *Hist. Sacræ*, lib. ii. cap. xxxi. p. 245.

point of authority was afterwards divided into two sects, extremely different both in their rites and in their opinions, and distinguished by the names of Nazarenes and Ebionites. The former are not placed by the ancient Christians in the heretical register [*e*]; but the latter were considered as a sect, whose tenets were destructive of the fundamental principles of the Christian religion. These sects made use of a *gospel*, or history of Christ, different from that which is received among us, and concerning which there have been many disputes among the learned [*f*]. The term Nazarenes was not originally the name of a sect, but that which distinguished the disciples of Jesus in general. And as those whom the Greeks called Christians, received the name of Nazarenes among the Jews, this latter name was not considered as a mark of ignominy or contempt. Those, indeed, who, after their separation from their brethren, retained the title of Nazarenes, differed much from the true disciples of Christ, to whom that name had been originally given; "they held, that Christ was "born of a virgin, and was also in a *certain manner* united to the divine nature; they refused

[*e*] Epiphanius was the first writer who placed the Nazarenes in the list of heretics. He wrote in the fourth century, but is very far from being remarkable, either for his fidelity or judgment.

☞ [*f*] This gospel, which was called indiscriminately the gospel of the Nazarenes, or Hebrews, is certainly the same with the gospel of the Ebionites, the gospel of the twelve apostles, and is very probably that which St. Paul refers to, Galatians, ch. i. ver. 6. Dr. Mosheim refers his readers, for an account of this gospel, to Fabricius, in his *Codex Apocryph. Nov. Test.* tom. i. p. 355. and to a work of his own, entitled *Vindiciæ contra Tolandi Nazarenum*, p. 112. The reader will, however, find a still more accurate and satisfactory account of this gospel, in the first volume of the learned and judicious Mr. Jones' incomparable *Method of settling the Canonical Authority of the New Testament.*

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"to abandon the ceremonies prescribed by the "law of Moses, but were far from attempting "to impose the observance of these ceremonies "upon the Gentile Christians; they rejected also "all those additions that were made to the "Mosaic institutions, by the Pharisees and the "doctors of the law [*g*];" and from hence we may easily see the reason why the greatest part of the Christians treated the Nazarenes with a more than ordinary degree of gentleness and forbearance.

Ebionites, their origin doubtful.

III. It is a doubtful matter from whence the Ebionites derived their name, whether from that of some of their principal doctors, or from their poverty [*h*]. One thing, however, is certain, and that is, that their sentiments and doctrines were much more pernicious than those of the Nazarenes [*i*]. For, though they believed the celestial mission of Christ, and his participation of a divine nature, yet they regarded him as a man born of Joseph and Mary, according to the ordinary course of nature. They, moreover, asserted, that the ceremonial law, instituted by Moses, was not only obligatory upon the Jews, but also upon all others; and that the observance of it was essential to salvation. And as St. Paul had very different sentiments from them, concerning

[*g*] See Mich. le Quien, *Adnot. ad Damascenum*, tom. i. p. 82, 83; as also a dissertation of the same author, *De Nazarenis et corum fide*, which is the seventh of those that he has subjoined to his edition of the works of *Damascenus*.

[*h*] See Fabric. *ad Philostr. de Hæresibus*, p. 81; as also Ittigius, *De Hæresibus, ævi Apostolici*.

☞ [*i*] The learned Mr. Jones looked upon these two sects as differing very little from one another. He attributes to them both much the same doctrines, and alleges, that the Ebionites had only made some small additions to the old Nazarene system. See the *New and full Method of settling the Canonical Authority of the New Testament*, vol. i. p. 385.

cerning the obligation of the ceremonial law, and had opposed the observance of it in the warmest manner, so, of consequence, they held this apostle in abhorrence, and treated his writings with the utmost disrespect. Nor were they only attached to the rites instituted by Moses, they went still further, and received, with an equal degree of veneration, the superstitions of their ancestors, and the ceremonies and traditions which the Pharisees presumptuously added to the law [*k*].

Sects that arose from the oriental philosophy.

IV. These obscure and unfrequented heretical assemblies were very little detrimental to the Christian cause, which suffered much more from those sects, whose leaders explained the doctrines of Christianity in a manner conformable to the dictates of the oriental philosophy concerning the origin of evil. The oriental doctors, who, before this century, had lived in the greatest obscurity, came forth from their retreat under the reign of Adrian [*l*], exposed themselves to public view, and gathered together, in various provinces, assemblies, whose numbers were very considerable. The ancient records mention a great number of these demi-christian sects, many of which are no farther known than by their distinguishing names, which, perhaps, is the only circumstance in which they differ from each other. One division however, of these oriental

 Christians,

[*k*] Irenæus, lib. i. *Contra Hæres.* cap. xxvi. p. 105. edit. Massueti. Epiphanius gives a large account of the Ebionites, *Hæres.* xxx. But he deserves little credit, since he confesses (sect. 3. p. 127. and sect. 4. p. 141.) that he had confounded the Sampsæans and Elcesaites with the Ebionites, and also acknowledges that the first Ebionites were strangers to the errors with which he charges them.

[*l*] Clemens Alex. *Stromat,* lib. viii. cap. xvii. p. 898. Cyprianus, epist. lxxv.

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Christians may be considered as a real and important, since the two branches it produced were vastly superior to the rest in reputation, and made more noise in the world than the other multiplied subdivisions of this pernicious sect. Of this famous division, one branch which arose in Asia, preserved the oriental doctrine concerning the origin of the world, unmixed with other sentiments and opinions; while the other, which was formed in *Egypt*, made a motely mixture of this philosophy with the tenets and prodigies adopted in the religious system of that superstitious country. The doctrine of the former surpassed in simplicity and perspicuity that of the latter, which consisted of a vast variety of parts so artfully combined, that the explication of them became a matter of much difficulty.

The Asiatics.

Elxai and his followers.

V. Among the doctors of the Asiatic branch, the first place is due to Elxai, a Jew, who, during the reign of Trajan, is said to have formed the sect of the Elcesaites. This heretic, though a Jew, attached to the worship of one God, and full of veneration for Moses, corrupted, nevertheless, the religion of his ancestors by blending with it a multitude of fictions drawn from the oriental philosophy; pretending also, after the example of the Essenes, to give a rational explication of the law of Moses, he reduced it to a mere allegory. It is, at the same time, proper to observe, that some have doubted whether the Elcesaites are to be reckoned among the Christian, or the Jewish sects; and Epiphanius, who was acquainted with a certain production of Elxai, expresses his uncertainty in this matter. Elxai, indeed, in that book, mentions Christ with the highest encomiums, without, however, adding any circumstance from whence it might be concluded with certainty, that Jesus

of

of Nazareth was the Christ of whom he spoke [*m*].

VI. If, then, Elxai be improperly placed among the leaders of the sect now under consideration, we may place at its head Saturninus of *Antioch*, who is one of the first Gnostic chiefs mentioned in history. He held the doctrine of *two principles*, from whence proceeded all things; the one *a wise* and *benevolent deity;* and the other *matter, a principle essentially evil*, and which he supposed under the superintendence of a certain intelligence of a malignant nature. "The world "and its first inhabitants were (according to the "system of this raving philosopher) created by "seven angels, which presided over the seven "planets. This work was carried on without "the knowledge of the *benevolent deity*, and in "opposition to the will of the *material principle.* "The former, however, beheld it with approbation, and honoured it with several marks of "his beneficence. He endowed with rational "souls the beings who inhabited this new "system, to whom their creators had imparted "nothing more than the mere animal life; and "having divided the world into seven parts, he "distributed them among the seven *angelic architects*, one of whom was the god of the Jews, "and reserved to himself the supreme empire "over all. To these creatures, whom the *benevolent principle* had endowed with reasonable "souls, and with dispositions that led to goodness and virtue, the *evil being*, to maintain his "empire, added another kind, whom he formed "of a wicked and malignant character; and "hence the difference we see among men. When "the

Saturninus, his extravagant fancies.

[*m*] Euseb. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. vi. cap. xxxviii. p. 234. Epiphanius, *Hæres*, xix. sect. 3. p. 41. Theodoretus, *Fabul. Hæret.* lib. ii. cap. vii. p. 221.

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"the creators of the world fell from their allegiance to the Supreme Deity, God sent from heaven into our globe, a *restorer of order*, whose name was Christ. This divine conqueror came clothed with a corporeal appearance, but not with a *real* body; he came to destroy the empire of the *material principle*, and to point out to virtuous souls the way by which they must return to God. This way is beset with difficulties and sufferings; since those souls, who propose returning to the Supreme Being after the dissolution of this mortal body, must abstain from wine, flesh, wedlock, and in short, from every thing that tends to sensual gratification, or even bodily refreshment." Saturninus taught these extravagant doctrines in *Syria*, but principally at *Antioch*, and drew after him many disciples by the pompous appearance of an extraordinary virtue [*n*].

Cerdo Marcion.

VII. Cerdo the Syrian, and Marcion, son to the bishop of Pontus, belong to the Asiatic sect, though they began to establish their doctrine at *Rome*, and having given a turn somewhat different to the oriental superstition, may themselves be considered as the heads of a new sect which bears their names. Amidst the obscurity and doubts that render so uncertain the history of these two men, the following fact is incontestable, *viz.* That Cerdo had been spreading his doctrine at *Rome* before the arrival of Marcion there; and that the latter having, through his own misconduct, forfeited a place to which he aspired in the church of *Rome*, attached himself, through resentment, to the impostor Cerdo, and propagated his impious doctrines with an astonishing

[*n*] Irenæus, lib. i. cap. xxiv. Euseb. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. iv. cap. vii. Theodoret. *Fabul. Hæret.* lib. i. cap. ii. Epiphan. *Hæres.* xxiii. Theodoret. *Fabul. Hær.* lib. i. cap. ii.

ing success throughout the world. "After the "example of the oriental doctors, they held the "existence of *two principles*, the one perfectly "*good*, and the other perfectly *evil*. Between "these, they imagined an *intermediate kind of* "*deity*, neither perfectly good, nor perfectly "evil, but *of a mixed nature* (so Marcion ex- "presses it), and so far just and powerful, as to "administer rewards and inflict punishments. "This *middle deity* is the creator of this inferior "world, and the *god and legislator of the Jewish* "*nation;* he wages perpetual war with the *evil* "*principle;* and both the one and the other aspire "to the place of the Supreme Being, and ambi- "tiously attempt subjecting to their authority all "the inhabitants of the world. The Jews are "the subjects of that powerful *genius* who form- "ed this globe; the other nations, who worship "a variety of gods, are under the empire of the "*evil principle*. Both these conflicting powers "exercise oppressions upon rational and immor- "tal souls, and keep them in a tedious and mi- "serable captivity. Therefore the Supreme "God, in order to terminate this war, and to "deliver from their bondage those souls whose "origin is celestial and divine, sent to the Jews "a *being* most like unto himself, even his Son "Jesus Christ, clothed with a certain shadowy "resemblance of a body, that thus he might be "visible to mortal eyes. The commission of this "celestial messenger, was to destroy the empire "both of the *evil principle*, and of the *author of* "*this world*, and to bring back wandering souls "to God. On this account, he was attacked "with inexpressible violence and fury by the "*prince of darkness*, and by the *god of the Jews*, "but without effect, since, having a body only in "appearance, he was thereby rendered incapable "of suffering. Those who follow the sacred

"directions

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"directions of this celestial conductor, mortify "the body by fastings and austerities, call off "their minds from the allurements of sense, and, "renouncing the precepts of the god of the "Jews, and of the prince of darkness, turn their "eyes towards the Supreme Being, shall, after "death, ascend to the mansions of felicity and "perfection." In consequence of all this, the rule of manners which Marcion prescribed to his followers, was excessively austere, containing an express prohibition of wedlock, of the use of wine, flesh, and of all the external comforts of life. Notwithstanding the rigour of this severe discipline, great numbers embraced the doctrines of Marcion, of whom Lucan, or Lucian, Severus, Blastes, and principally Apelles, are said to have varied, in some things, from the opinions of their master, and to have formed new sects [*o*].

Bardesanes.

VIII. Bardesanes and Tatian are commonly supposed to have been of the school of Valentine, the Egyptian. But this notion is entirely without foundation, since that doctrine differs in many things from that of the Valentinians, approaching nearer to that of the oriental philosophy concerning the *two principles*. Bardesanes, native of *Edessa*, was a man of a very acute genius, and acquired a shining reputation by his writings, which were in great number, and valuable for the profound erudition they contained. Seduced by the fantastic charms of the oriental philosophy, he adopted it with zeal, but, at the same time, with certain modifications, that

[*o*] See Irenæus, Epiphanius, and particularly Tertullian's *Five Books against the Marcionites*, with his *Poem against* Marcion, and the *Dialogue against the Marcionites*, which is generally ascribed to Origen. See also Tillemont's *Memoires*, and Beausobre's *Histoire du Manicheisme*, tom. ii. p. 69.

that rendered his system less extravagant than that of the Marcionites, against whom he wrote a very learned treatise. The sum of his doctrine is as follows; "There is a Supreme God, pure "and benevolent, absolutely free from all evil "and imperfection; and there is also a *prince of* "*darkness*, the fountain of all evil, disorder, and "misery. The Supreme God created the world "without any mixture of evil in its composition; "he gave existence also to its inhabitants, who "came out of his forming hand, pure and incor- "rupt, endued with subtle, ethereal bodies, and "spirits of a celestial nature. But when, in "process of time, the *prince of darkness* had en- "ticed men to sin, then the Supreme God, per- "mitted them to fall into sluggish and gross "bodies, formed of corrupt matter by the *evil* "*principle;* he permitted also the deprivation "and disorder which this malignant being intro- "duced, both into the natural and the moral "world, designing, by this permission, to punish "the degeneracy and rebellion of an apostate "race; and hence proceeds the perpetual con- "flict between reason and passion in the mind of "man. It was on this account, that Jesus "descended from the upper regions, clothed "not with a real, but with a celestial and ærial "body, and taught mankind to subdue that "body of corruption which they carry about "with them in this mortal life; and, by *absti-* "*nence, fasting*, and *contemplation*, to disengage "themselves from the servitude and dominion of "that *malignant matter*, which chained down the "soul to low and ignoble pursuits. Those, who "hear the voice of this divine instructor, and "submit themselves to his discipline, shall, after "the dissolution of this terrestrial body, mount "up to the mansions of felicity, clothed with "æthereal vehicles, or celestial bodies." Such was

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was the doctrine of Bardesanes, who afterwards abandoned the chimerical part of this system, and returned to a better mind: though his sect subsisted a long time in *Syria* [*p*].

Tatian.

IX. Tatian, by birth an Assyrian, and a disciple of Justin Martyr, is more distinguished, by the ancient writers, on account of his genius and learning, and the excessive and incredible austerity of his life and manners, than by any remarkable errors or opinions which he taught his followers. It appears, however, from the testimony of credible writers, that Tatian looked upon *matter* as the fountain of all evil, and therefore recommended, in a particular manner, the mortification of the body; that he distinguished the creator of the world from the Supreme Being; denied the reality of Christ's body; and corrupted the Christian religion with several other tenets of the oriental philosophy. He had a great number of followers, who were, after him, called Tatianists [*q*], but were, nevertheless, more frequently distinguished from other sects by names relative to the austerity of their manners. For as they rejected, with a sort of horror, all the comforts and conveniencies of life, and abstained from wine with such a rigorous obstinacy, as to use nothing but water even at the celebration of the Lord's supper; as they macerated their bodies

[*p*] See the writers that give accounts of the ancient heresies, as also Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. iv. cap. xxx. p. 151. Origen. *Dial. contra Marcionitas,* sect. 3. p. 70. edit. Wetstenii. Frid. Strunzii, *Hist. Bardesanes,* &c. Beausobre, *Hist. du. Manich.* vol. ii. p. 128.

[*q*] We have yet remaining of the writings of Tatian, an *Oration* addressed to the Greeks. As to his opinions, they may be gathered from Clemens Alexandrinus, *Stromat.* lib. iii. p. 460. Epiphanius, *Hæres.* xlvi. cap. i. p. 391. Origen. *De oratione,* cap. xiii. p. 77. of the *Oxford* edition. None, however, of the ancients have written professedly concerning the doctrines of Tatian.

bodies by continual fastings, and lived a severe life of celibacy and abstinence, so they were called Encratites *, Hydroparastates †, and Apotactites ‡.

The peculiar sentiments of the Egyptian Gnostics.

X. Hitherto, we have only considered the doctrine of the Asiatic Gnostics. Those of the Egyptian branch differ from them in general in this, that they blended into one mass the oriental philosophy and the Egyptian theology; the former of which the Asiatics preserved unmixed in its original simplicity. The Egyptians were moreover particularly distinguished from the Asiatic Gnostics, by the following difference in their religious system, *viz.* 1. That though, besides the existence of a *deity*, they maintained that also of an *eternal matter*, endued with life and motion, yet they did not acknowledge an *eternal principle of darkness*, or the evil principle of the Persians. 2. They supposed that our blessed Saviour was a compound of two persons, of the man Jesus, and of Christ, the Son of God; that the divine nature entered into the man Jesus, when he was baptized by John in the river *Jordan*, and departed from him when he was seized by the Jews. 3. They attributed to Christ a real, not an imaginary body: though it must be confessed, that they were much divided in their sentiments on this head. 4. Their discipline with respect to life and manners, was much less severe than those of the Asiatic sect, and seems, in some points, to have been favourable to the corruptions and passions of men.

Basilides.

XI. Basilides has generally obtained the first place among the Egyptian Gnostics. "He acknowledged the existence of one Supreme God, "perfect in goodness and wisdom, who produced "from his own substance seven beings, or æons, "of a most excellent nature. Two of these "æons, called *Dynamis* and *Sophia* (i. e. *power* "and *wisdom*), engendered the angels of the "highest

* Or, temperate. † Or, drinkers of water. ‡ Renouncers.

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" highest order. These angels formed an heaven " for their habitation, and brought forth other " angelic beings, of a nature somewhat inferior " to their own. Many other generations of an- " gels followed these, new heavens were also " created, until the number of angelic orders, " and of their respective heavens, amounted to " *three hundred and sixty-five*, and thus equalled " the days of the year. All these are under the " empire of an omnipotent Lord, whom Basili- " des called *Abraxas*." This word (which was certainly in use among the Egyptians before his time) contains numeral letters to the amount of 365, and thereby expresses the number of heavens and angelic orders above mentioned [*r*]. " The " inha-

[*r*] We have remaining a great number of gems, and receive more from *Egypt* from time to time, on which, beside other figures of Egyptian taste, we find the word Abraxas engraved. See, for this purpose, a work entitled, Macarii *Abraxas, seu de gemmis Basilidianis disquisitio*, which was published at *Antwerp*, with several improvements by Jo. Chifletius, in 4to, in 1657. See also Montfaucon, *Palæograph. Græc.* lib. ii. cap. viii. p. 177. All these gems are supposed to come from Basilides, and therefore bear his name. Most of them, however, contain the marks of a superstition too gross to be attributed even to an half Christian, and bear also emblematic characters of the Egyptian theology. It is not, therefore, just to attribute them all to Basilides, (who though erroneous in many of his opinions, was yet a follower of Christ), but such of them only as carry some mark of the Christian doctrine and discipline.——There is no doubt but that the old Egyptian word Abraxas was appropriated to the governor or lord of the heavens, and that Basilides, having learned it from the philosophy of his nation, retained it in his religious system. See Beausobre *Hist du Manicheisme*, vol. ii. p. 51. and also Jo. Bapt. Passeri, in his *Dissert. de gemmis Basilidianis*, which makes a part of that splendid work which he published at *Florence*, 1750, *De gemmis stelliferis*, tom. ii. p. 221. See also the sentiments of the learned Jablonski, concerning the signification of the word Abraxas, as they are delivered in a dissertation inserted in the seventh volume of the *Miscell.* Leips, *Nova.* Passerius affirms, that none of these gems relate to Basilides, but that they concern only magicians, *i. e.* sorcerers, fortune-tellers, and such like adventurers.

" inhabitants of the lowest heavens, which " touched upon the borders of the eternal, ma- " lignant, and self-animated *matter*, conceived " the design of forming a world from that con- " fused mass, and of creating an order of beings " to people it. This design was carried into " execution, and was approved by the Supreme " God, who, to the animal life, with which only " the inhabitants of this new world were at first " endowed, added a reasonable soul, giving, at " the same time, to the angels, the empire over " them."

XII. " These angelic beings, advanced to the " government of the world which they had created, " fell, by degrees, from their original purity, and " manifested soon the fatal marks of their depra " vity and corruption. They not only endea- " voured to efface in the minds of men the know- " ledge of the Supreme Being, that they might " be worshipped in his stead, but also began to " war against one another, with an ambitious " view to enlarge, every one, the bounds of his " respective dominion. The most arrogant and " turbulent of all these angelic spirits, was that " which presided over the Jewish nation. Hence " the Supreme God, beholding with compassion " the miserable state of rational beings, who " groaned under the contests of these jarring " powers, sent from heaven his son Nus, or " Christ, the chief of the *æons*, that, joined in " a substantial union with the man Jesus, he " might restore the knowledge of the Supreme " God, destroy the empire of those angelic na- " tures

The enormous errors of his system.

venturers. Here, however, this learned man seems to go too far, since he himself acknowledges (p. 225.) that *he had sometimes found, on these gems, vestiges of the errors of* Basilides. These famous monuments stand yet in need of an interpreter, but of such an one as can join circumspection to diligence and erudition.

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"tures which presided over the world, and particularly that of the arrogant leader of the Jewish people. The god of the Jews, alarmed at this, sent forth his ministers to seize the man Jesus, and put him to death. They executed his commands, but their cruelty could not extend to Christ, against whom their efforts were vain [*s*]. Those souls, who obey the precepts of the Son of God, shall, after the dissolution of their mortal frame, ascend to the Father, while their bodies return to the corrupt mass of matter from whence they were formed. Disobedient spirits, on the contrary, shall pass successively into other bodies."

The moral doctrine of Basilides.

XIII. The doctrine of Basilides, in point of morals, if we may credit the account of most ancient writers, was favourable to the lusts and passions of mankind, and permitted the practice of all sorts of wickedness. But those whose testimonies are the most worthy of regard, give a quite different account of this teacher, and represent him as recommending the practice of virtue and piety in the strongest manner, and as having condemned not only the actual commission of iniquity, but even every inward propensity of the mind to a vicious conduct. It is true, there were, in his precepts relating to the conduct of life, some things which gave great offence to all true Christians. For he affirmed it to be lawful for them to conceal their religion, to deny Christ, when their lives were

[*s*] Many of the ancients have, upon the authority of Irenæus, accused Basilides of denying the reality of Christ's body, and of maintaining that Simon the Cyrenian was crucified in his stead. But this accusation is entirely groundless, as may be seen by consulting the *Commentar. de rebus. Christian. ante Constant.* p. 354, &c. &c. where it is demonstrated, that Basilides considered the divine Saviour as compounded of the man Jesus, and Christ the Son of God. It may be, indeed, that some of the disciples of Basilides entertained the opinion that is here unjustly attributed to their master.

were in danger, and to partake of the feasts of the Gentiles that were instituted in consequence of the sacrifices offered to idols. He endeavoured also to diminish the glory of those who suffered martyrdom for the cause of Christ; impiously maintained, that they were more heinous sinners than others, and that their sufferings were to be looked upon as a punishment inflicted upon them by the divine justice. Though he was led into this enormous error, by an absurd notion that all the calamities of this life were of a penal nature, and that men never suffered but in consequence of their iniquities, yet this rendered his principles greatly suspected, and the irregular lives of some of his disciples seemed to justify the unfavourable opinion that was entertained concerning their master [*t*].

Carpocrates.

XIV. But whatever may be said of Basilides, it is certain, that he was far surpassed in impiety by Carpocrates, who was also of *Alexandria*, and who carried the Gnostic blasphemies to a more enormous degree of extravagance than they had ever been brought by any of that sect. His philosophical tenets agree, in general, with those of the Egyptian Gnostics. He acknowledged the existence of a Supreme God, and of the *æons* derived from him by successive generations. He maintained the eternity of a *corrupt matter*, and the creation of the world from thence by angelic powers, as also the divine origin of souls unhappily imprisoned in mortal bodies, *&c.* But, beside these, he propagated other sentiments and maxims of a horrid kind. He asserted, that Jesus was born of Joseph and Mary, according to the ordinary course of nature, and was distinguished from the

[*t*] For a farther account of Basilides, the reader may consult Ren, Massuet, *Dissert. in Irenæum*, and Beausobre, *Hist. du Municheisme*, vol. ii. p. 8.

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rest of mankind by nothing but his superior fortitude and greatness of soul. His doctrine, also, with respect to practice, was licentious in the highest degree; for he not only allowed his disciples a full liberty to sin, but recommended to them a vicious course of life, as a matter both of obligation and necessity; asserting, that eternal salvation was only attainable by those who had committed all sorts of crimes, and had daringly filled up the measure of iniquity. It is almost incredible, that one who maintained the existence of a Supreme Being, who acknowledged Christ as the Saviour of mankind, could entertain such monstrous opinions as these. One would infer, indeed, from certain tenets of Carpocrates, that he adopted the common doctrine of the Gnostics concerning Christ, and acknowledged also the laws which this divine Saviour imposed upon his disciples. But, notwithstanding this, it is beyond all doubt, that the precepts and opinions of this Gnostic are full of impiety; since he held, that lusts and passions, being implanted in our nature by God himself, were consequently void of guilt, and had nothing criminal in them; that all actions were indifferent in their own nature, and were rendered good or evil only by the opinions of men, or by the laws of the state; that it was the will of God, that all things should be possessed in common, the female sect not excepted; but that human laws, by an arbitrary tyranny, branded those as robbers and adulterers, who only used their natural rights. It is easy to perceive, that by these tenets, all the principles of virtue were destroyed, and a door opened to the most horrid licentiousness, and to the most profligate and enormous wickedness [*u*].

XV. Va-

[*u*] See Iren. *Contra Hæres.* cap. xxv. Clemens Alex. *Stromata.* lib. iii. p. 511.

Valentine.

XV. Valentine, who was likewise an Egyptian by birth, was eminently distinguished from all his brethren by the extent of his fame, and the multitude of his followers. His sect, which took rise at *Rome*, grew up to a state of consistence and vigour in the isle of *Cyprus*, and spread itself through *Asia*, *Africa* and *Europe*, with an amazing rapidity. The principles of Valentine were, generally speaking, the same with those of the Gnostics, whose name he assumed, yet in many things he entertained opinions that were particular to himself. "He placed, for instance, in the "*pleroma* (so the Gnostics called the habitation "of the Deity) thirty *œons*, of which the one half "were male and the other female. To these he "added four others, which were of neither sex, "*viz.* *Horus*, who guarded the borders of the "*pleroma*, Christ, *the Holy Ghost*, and Jesus. "The youngest of the *œons*, called *Sophia* (i. e. "wisdom,) conceived an ardent desire of com-"prehending the nature of the Supreme Being, "and, by the force of this propensity, brought "forth a daughter, named *Achamoth*. *Achamoth* "being exiled from the *pleroma*, fell down into "the rude and undigested mass of matter, to "which she gave a certain arrangement; and, "by the assistance of Jesus, produced the *demi-*"*urge*, the lord and creator of all things. This "*demiurge* separated the subtle, or *animal* matter, "from that of the grosser, or more *terrestrial* "kind; out of the former he created the superior "world, or the visible heavens; and out of the "latter he formed the inferior world, or this "terraqueous globe. He also made man, in "whose composition the subtle, and also the "grosser matter were both united, and that in "equal portions; but *Achamoth*, the mother of "*demiurge*, added to these two substances, of "which the human race was formed, *a spiritual*

"*and celestial substance.*" This is the sum of that intricate and tedious fable, that the extravagant brain of Valentine imposed upon the world for a system of religious philosophy; and from this it appears, that, though he explained the origin of the world, and of the human race in a more subtle manner than the other Gnostics, yet he did not differ from them in reality. His imagination was more wild and inventive than that of his brethren; and this is manifest in the whole of his doctrine, which is no more than Gnosticism, set out with some supernumerary fringes, as will further appear from what follows.

His idle dreams.

XVI. "The creator of this world, according to "Valentine, arrived, by degrees, to that pitch "of arrogance, that he either imagined himself "to be God alone, or, at least, was desirous that "mankind should consider him as such. For this "purpose, he sent forth prophets to the Jewish "nation, to declare his claim to the honour that "is due to the Supreme Being, and in this also "the other angels that preside over the different "parts of the universe immediately set themselves to imitate his ambition. To chastise this "lawless arrogance of *demiurge*, and to illuminate "the minds of rational beings with the knowledge "of the true and Supreme Deity, Christ appeared "upon earth, composed of an animal and spiritual substance, and clothed, moreover, with "an ærial body. This Redeemer, in descending "upon earth, passed through the womb of Mary, "as the pure water flows through the untainted "conduit. Jesus, one of the supreme *œons*, was "substantially united to him, when he was "baptized by John in the waters of *Jordan*. "The creator of this world, when he perceived "that the foundations of his empire were shaken "by this divine man, caused him to be apprehended and nailed to the cross. But be-

"fore

" fore Christ submitted to this punishment, not " only Jesus the Son of God, but also the ra- " tional soul of Christ ascended up on high, " so that only the animal soul and the etherial " body suffered crucifixion. Those who, aban- " doning the service of false deities, and the wor- " ship of the God of the Jews, live according to " the precepts of Christ, and submit the ani- " mal and sensual soul to the discipline of reason, " shall be truly happy; their rational, and also their " sensual souls shall ascend to those glorious seats " of bliss which border on the *pleroma;* and when " all the parts of the divine nature, or all souls are " purified thoroughly, and separated from *matter*, " then a raging fire, let loose from its prison, shall " spread its flames throughout the universe, and " dissolve the frame of this corporeal world." Such is the doctrine of Valentine and the Gnostics; such also are the tenets of the oriental philosophy, and they may be summed up in the following propositions; *This world is a compound of good and evil. Whatever is good in it, comes down from the Supreme God, the Father of lights, and to him it shall return: and then the world shall be entirely destroyed* [*w*].

[*w*] It is proper to observe, for the information of those who desire a more copious account of the Valentinian heresy, that almost all the ancient writers have written upon this subject, especially Irenæus, *Libro primo contra Hæres.* Tertullian, in a particular treatise upon that matter; Clemens Alex. &c. Among the moderns, see Jo. Franc. Buddæus, *Dissert. de hæresi Valentiniana,* in his introduction to his history of the Hebrew philosophers, which dissertation gave occasion to many disputes concerning the origin of this heresy. Some of the moderns have endeavoured to reconcile, with reason, this obscure and absurd doctrine of the Valentinians. See, for this purpose, the following authors: Souverain *Platonisme devoilé,* chap. viii. p. 68. Camp. Vitringa, *Observ. Sacr.* lib. i. cap. ii. p. 131. Beausobre, *Histoire du Manicheisme,* p. 548. Jac. Basnage, *Hist. des Juifs,* tom. iii. p. 729. Petr. Faydit, *Eclaircissemens sur l'Hist. Ecclesiast. des deux premiers,*

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Various sects of the Valentinians.

The greater.

XVII. We learn from ancient writers, that the sect of the Valentinians was divided into many branches. One of these was the sect of the Ptolemaites, so called from their chief Ptolemy, who differed in opinion from his master Valentine, with respect both to the number and nature of the *æons*. Another of these was the sect of the Secundians, whose chief, Secundus, one of the principal followers of Valentine, maintained the doctrine of two eternal principles, *viz. light* and *darkness*, from whence arose the good and the evil that are observable in the universe. From the same source arose the sect of Heracleon, from whose writings Clemens and Origen have made many extracts; as also that of the Marcosians, whose leaders, Marc and Colobarsus, added many absurd fictions to those of Valentine; though it is certain, at the same time, that many errors were attributed to them, which they did not maintain [*x*]. I omit the mention of some other sects, to which the Valentinian heresy is said to have given rise. Whether, in reality they all sprung from this source, is a question of a very doubtful kind, especially if we consider the errors into which the ancients have fallen, in tracing out the origin of the various sects which divided the church [*y*]. XVIII.

premiers Siecles. How vain all such endeavours are, might easily be shewn; nay, Valentine himself has determined the matter, by acknowledging that his doctrine is absolutely and entirely different from that of other Christians.

☞ [*x*] Marc did not certainly entertain all the opinions that are attributed to him. Those, however, which we are certain, that he adopted, are sufficient to convince us that he was out of his senses. He maintained, among other crude fancies, that the *plenitude* and *perfection* of truth resided in the Greek *alphabet*; and alleges that as the reason why Jesus Christ was called the *Alpha* and the *Omega*.

[*y*] Concerning these sects, the reader will find something fuller in Irenæus, and the other ancient writers; and a yet more learned and satisfactory account in Grabe's *Spicilegium Patr.*

XVIII. It is not necessary to take any particular notice of the more obscure and less considerable of the Gnostic sects, of which the ancient writers scarcely mention any thing but the name, and one or two of their distinguishing tenets. Such were the Adamites, who are said to have professed an exact imitation of the primitive state of innocence; the Cainites, who treated as saints, with the utmost marks of admiration and respect, Cain, Cora, Dathan, the inhabitants of Sodom, and even the traitor Judas. Such also were the Abelites, who entered into the bonds of matrimony, but neglected to fulfil its principal end, even the procreation of offspring; the Sethites, who honoured Seth in a particular manner, and looked upon him as the same person with Christ; the Florinians, who had Florinus and Blastus for their chiefs [z], and several others. It is highly probable that the ancient doctors, deceived by the variety of names that distinguished the heretics, may with too much precipitation have divided one sect into many; nay, it may be further questioned, whether they have, at all times, represented accurately the nature and true meaning of several opinions concerning which they have written. The less considerable.

XIX. The Ophites, or Serpentinians, a ridiculous sort of heretics, who had for their leader a man called Euphrates, deserve not the lowest place among the Egyptian Gnostics. This sect which had its origin among the Jews, was of a more Ophites.

Patr. et Hæreticor. sect. 2. p. 69. 82. There is an ample account of the *Marcossians* in Irenæus, *Contr. Hær.* lib. i. cap. xiv. p. 70.

☞ [z] Here Dr. Mosheim has fallen into a slight inaccuracy in confounding the opinions of these two heretics; since it is certain, that Blastus was for restoring the Jewish religion, and celebrated the passover on the fourteenth day; whereas Florinus was a Valentinian, and maintained the doctrine of the *two principles*, with other Gnostic errors.

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more ancient date than the Christian religion. A part of its followers embraced the gospel, while the other retained their primitive superstition, and from hence arose the division of the Ophites into Christian and Anti-christian. The Christian Ophites entertained almost the same fantastic opinions that were held by the other Egyptian Gnostics, concerning the *æons*, the *eternal matter*, the *creation of the world* in opposition to the will of God, the *rulers of the seven planets* that presided over this world, *the tyranny of demiurge*, and also concerning Christ united to the man Jesus, in order to destroy the empire of this usurper. But besides these, they maintained the following particular tenet, from whence also they received the name of Ophites, viz. "That the *serpent*, by which our first parents "were deceived, was either Christ himself, or "*Sophia*, concealed under the form of that ani-"mal;" and, in consequence of this opinion, they are said to have nourished a certain number of serpents, which they looked upon as sacred, and to which they offered a sort of worship, a subordinate kind of divine honours. It was no difficult matter for those, who made a distinction between the Supreme Being and the Creator of the world, and who looked upon every thing as divine, which was in opposition to *demiurge*, to fall into these extravagant notions.

Monarchians and Patropassians.

XX. The schisms and commotions that arose in the church, from a mixture of the oriental and Egyptian philosophy with the Christian religion, were in the second century, increased by those Grecian philosophers who embraced the doctrine of Christ. The Christian doctrine, concerning the *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost*, and the *two natures* united in our blessed Saviour, were, by no means, reconcileable with the tenets of the sages and doctors of *Greece*, who therefore endeavoured to explain them in such a manner as to render them

them comprehensible. Praxeas, a man of genius and learning, began to propagate these explications at *Rome*, and was severely persecuted for the errors they contained. He denied any *real* distinction between the *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost*, and maintained that the *Father*, sole creator of all things, had united to himself the *human nature* of Christ. Hence his followers were called Monarchians, because of their denying a plurality of persons in the Deity; and also Patropassians, because, according to Tertullian's account, they believed that the Father was so intimately united with the man Christ, his Son, that he suffered with him the anguish of an afflicted life, and the torments of an ignominious death. However ready many may have been to embrace this erroneous doctrine, it does not appear, that this sect formed to themselves a separate place of worship, or removed themselves from the ordinary assemblies of Christians [*a*].

Theodotus, Artemon.

XXI. An opinion highly resembling that now mentioned was, about the same time, professed at *Rome* by Theodotus, who, though a tanner, was a man of profound learning, and also by Artemas, or Artemon, from whom the sect of the Artemonites derived their origin. The accounts given of these two persons, by the ancient writers, are not only few in number, but are also extremely ambiguous and obscure. Their sentiments, however, as far as they can be collected from the best records, amount to this; "That, at the birth of "the man Christ, a certain *divine energy*, or por- "tion of the divine nature (and not the *person* "of the Father, as Praxeas imagined), united it- "self to him."

It is impossible to decide with any degree of certainty which of the two was the most ancient, Theo-

[*a*] Tertulliani *Lib contra Praxeam;* as also Petri Wesselingii *Probabilia,* cap. xxvi. p. 223.

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Theodotus, or Artemon; as also whether they both taught the same doctrine, or differed in their opinions. One thing, indeed, is certain, and that is, that the disciples of both applied the dictates of philosophy, and even the science of geometry, to the explication of the Christian doctrine.

Hermogenes.

XXII. A like attachment to the dictates of a presumptuous philosophy, induced Hermogenes, a painter by profession, to abandon the doctrine of Christianity concerning the origin of the world, and the nature of the soul, and thus to raise new troubles in the church. Regarding *matter* as the fountain of all evil, he could not persuade himself that God had created it from nothing, by an almighty act of his will; and therefore he maintained, that the world, with whatever it contains, as also the souls of men, and other spirits, were formed by the Deity from an uncreated and eternal mass of corrupt *matter*. In this doctrine there were many intricate things, and it manifestly jarred with the opinions commonly received among Christians relative to that difficult, and almost unsearchable subject. How Hermogenes explained those doctrines of Christianity which opposed his system, neither Tertullian, who refuted it, nor any of the ancient writers inform us [*b*].

The illiterate sect.

XXIII. These sects, which we have now been passing in review, may be justly regarded as the offspring of philosophy. But they were succeeded by one in which ignorance reigned, and which was the mortal enemy of philosophy and letters.

Montanus.

It was formed by Montanus, an obscure man, without any capacity or strength of judgment, and

[*b*] There is yet extant a book written by Tertullian against Hermogenes, in which the opinions of the latter concerning *matter, and the origin of the world*, are warmly opposed. We have lost another work of the same author, in which he refuted the notion of Hermogenes concerning *the soul*.

and who lived in a Phrygian village called *Pepuza*. This weak man was foolish and extravagant enough to take it into his head, that he was the *paraclete* or comforter [*c*], which the divine Saviour, at his departure from the earth, promised to send to his disciples to lead them to all truth. He made no attempts upon the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, but only declared, that he was sent with a divine commission, to give to the moral precepts delivered by Christ and his apostles

[*c*] Those are undoubtedly mistaken, who have asserted that Montanus gave himself out for the *Holy Ghost*. However weak he may have been in point of capacity, he was not fool enough to push his pretensions so far. Neither have they, who inform us that Montanus pretended to have received from above the same *spirit* or *paraclete*, which formerly animated the apostles, interpreted with accuracy the meaning of this heretic. It is, therefore, necessary to observe here, that Montanus made a distinction between the *paraclete* promised by Christ to his apostles, and the *Holy Spirit* that was shed upon them on the day of Pentecost; and understood by the former, a divine teacher pointed out by Christ, under the name of *paraclete*, or comforter, who was to perfect the gospel by the addition of some doctrines omitted by our Saviour, and to cast a full light upon others which were expressed in an obscure and imperfect manner, though, for wise reasons, which subsisted during the ministry of Christ; and, indeed, Montanus was not the only person that made this distinction. Other Christian doctors were of opinion, that the *paraclete* promised by Jesus to his disciples, was a divine ambassador, entirely distinct from the Holy Ghost, which was shed upon the apostles. In the third century, Manes interpreted the promise of Christ in this manner. He pretended, moreover, that he himself was the *paraclete*, and that, in his person, the prediction was fulfilled. Every one knows, that Mahomet entertained the same notion, and applied to himself the prediction of Christ, concerning the coming of the *paraclete*. It was, therefore this divine messenger that Montanus pretended to be, and not the Holy Ghost. This will appear with the utmost evidence, to those who read with attention the account given of this matter by Tertullian, who was the most famous of all the disciples of Montanus, and the most perfectly acquainted with every point of his doctrine.

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apostles the finishing *touch* that was to bring them to perfection. He was of opinion, that Christ and his apostles made, in their precepts, many allowances to the infirmities of those among whom they lived, and that this condescending indulgence rendered their system of moral laws imperfect and incomplete. He therefore added to the laws of the gospel many austere decisions; inculcated the necessity of multiplying fasts; prohibited second marriages as unlawful; maintained that the church should refuse absolution to those who had fallen into the commission of enormous sins; and condemned all care of the body, especially all nicety in dress, and all female ornaments. The excessive austerity of this ignorant fanatic did not stop here; he shewed the same aversion to the noblest employments of the mind, that he did to the innocent enjoyments of life; and gave it as his opinion, that philosophy, arts, and whatever savoured of polite literature, should be mercilessly banished from the Christian church. He looked upon those Christians as guilty of a most heinous transgression, who saved their lives by flight, from the persecuting sword, or who ransomed them by money, from the hands of their cruel and mercenary judges. I might mention many other precepts of the same teacher, equal to these in severity and rigour.

The success of Montanus and his doctrine.

XXIV. It was impossible to suffer, within the bounds of the church, an enthusiast, who gave himself out for a teacher; whose precepts were superior in sanctity to those of Christ himself, and who imposed his austere discipline upon Christians, as enjoined by a divine authority, and dictated by the oracle of celestial wisdom, which spoke to the world through him. Besides his dismal predictions concerning the disasters that were to happen in the empire, and the approaching

approaching destruction of the Roman republic, were every way proper to render him obnoxious to the governing powers, and also to excite their resentment against the church, which nourished such an inauspicious prophet in its bosom. Montanus, therefore, first by a decree of certain assemblies, and afterwards by the unanimous voice of the whole church, was solemnly separated from the body of the faithful. It is, however, certain, that the very severity of his doctrines gained him the esteem and confidence of many, who were far from being of the lowest order. The most eminent among these were, Priscilla and Maximilla, ladies more remarkable for their opulence than for their virtue, and who fell with a high degree of warmth and zeal into the visions of their fanatical chief, prophesied like him, and imitated the pretended *paraclete* in all the variety of his extravagance and folly. Hence it became an easy matter for Montanus to erect a new church, which was also in effect, first established at *Pepuza*, a town in *Phrygia*, and afterwards spread abroad through *Asia*, *Africa*, and a part of *Europe*. The most eminent and learned of all the followers of this rigid enthusiast was Tertullian, a man of great learning and genius, but of an austere and melancholy natural temper. This great man, by adopting the sentiments of Montanus, and maintaining his cause with fortitude, and even vehemence, in a multitude of books written upon that occasion, has shewn to the world a mortifying spectacle of the deviations of which human nature is capable, even in those in whom it seems to have approached the nearest to perfection [*d*].

[*d*] For an account of the Montanists, see Euseb. *Eccl. History*, book v. ch. xvi. and in general all the writers ancient and

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and modern (especially Tertullian) who have professedly written concerning the sects of the early ages. The learned Mr. Theophilus Wernsdorf, published at *Dantzick*, in the year 1751, a most ingenious exposition of whatever regards the sect of the Montanists, under the following title: *Commentatio de Montanistis Sæculi secundi, vulgo creditis Hæreticis.*

THE

THIRD CENTURY.

PART I.

The EXTERNAL HISTORY of the CHURCH.

CHAPTER I.

Which contains the prosperous events that happened to the Church during this century.

I. THAT the Christians suffered in this century, calamities and injuries of the most dreadful kind, is a matter that admits of no debate; nor was there, indeed, any period in which they were not exposed to perpetual dangers. For, not to mention the fury of the people, set in motion so often by the craft and zeal of their licentious priests, the evil came from a higher source; the prætors and magistrates, notwithstanding the ancient laws of the emperors, in favour of the Christians, had it in their power to pursue them with all sorts of vexations, as often as avarice, cruelty or superstition roused up the infernal spirit of persecution in their breasts. At the same time, it is certain, that the rights and privileges of the Christians were multiplied, in this century, much more than many are apt to imagine. In the army, at court, and, indeed, in all the orders of the nation, there was a considerable number of Christians, who

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The rights and immunities of the Christians increased.

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lived entirely unmolested; and what is still more, the profession of Christianity was no obstacle to public preferment under most of the emperors that reigned in this century. It is also certain, that the Christians had, in many places, houses where they assembled for the purposes of divine worship, and that with the knowledge and connivance of the emperors and magistrates. And though it be more than probable, that this liberty was, upon many occasions, and even, for the most part, purchased at a high rate, yet it is manifest, that some of the emperors were very favourably inclined towards the Christians, and were far from having an aversion to their religion.

Under various emperors.

II. Caracalla, the son of Severus, was proclaimed emperor in the year 211, and, during the six years of his government, he neither oppressed the Christians himself, nor permitted any others to treat them with cruelty or injustice. Heliogabalus also, though in other respects the most infamous of all princes [*a*], and, perhaps, the most odious of all mortals, shewed no marks of bitterness or aversion to the disciples of Jesus. His successor, Alexander Severus, who was a prince distinguished by a noble assemblage of the most excellent and illustrious virtues, did not, indeed, abrogate the laws that had been enacted against the Christians; and this is the reason why we have some examples of martyrdom under his administration. It is nevertheless certain, that he shewed them, in many ways, and upon every occasion that was offered him, the most undoubted marks of benignity and favour; nay, he is said to have gone so far as to pay a certain sort of worship to the divine author of our religion [*b*]. This his favourable inclinations towards

The benignity of Alexander towards the Christians.

[*a*] Lampridius. *Vita Elagabali*, c. iii. p. 706.

[*b*] Lamprid. *De Vita Severi*, cap. xxix. p. 930. Vide Carol.

wards the Christians was probably owing, at first, to the instructions and counsels of his mother, Julia Mammæa, for whom he had a high degree of love and veneration. Julia had very favourable sentiments of the Christian religion; and, being once at *Antioch*, sent for the famous Origen from *Alexandria*, in order to enjoy the pleasure and advantage of his conversation and instructions. Those who assert, that Julia, and her son Alexander, embraced the Christian religion, are by no means furnished with unexceptionable testimonies to confirm this fact; though we may affirm, with confidence, that this virtuous prince looked upon Christianity as meriting, beyond all other religions, toleration and favour from the state, and considered its author as worthy of a place among those who have been distinguished by their sublime virtues, and honoured with a commission from above [*c*].

Other emperors favourable to the Christians.

III. Under Gordian, the Christians lived in tranquillity. His successors the Philips, father and son, proved so favourable, and even friendly to them, that these two emperors passed, in the opinion of many, for Christians; and, indeed, the arguments alleged to prove that they embraced, though in a secret and clandestine manner, the religion of Jesus, seem to have a high degree of weight, and render this fact extremely probable. But as these arguments are opposed by others equally specious, that famous question, relating to the religion of Philip the Arabian, and

Question concerning the religion of the emperor Philip.

Carol. Henr. Zeibichii, *Diss. de Christo ab Alexandro in larario cultu*, quæ extat in *Miscellan. Lips. nov.* tom. iii. p. 42.

[*c*] Vide Frid. Spanhemii, *Diss. de Lucii Britonum Regis, Juliæ Mammææ, et Philipporum conversionibus*, tom. ii. opp. p. 400. Item. Paul. Jablonski, *Diss. de Alexandro Severo sacris Christianis per Gnosticos initiato*, in *Miscellan. Lips. novis*, tom. iv. p. 56.

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and his son must be left undecided [*d*]. Neither side offers reasons so victorious and unanswerable, as to produce a full and complete conviction; and this is therefore one of those many cases, where a suspension of judgment is both allowable and wise. With respect to Gallienus, and some other emperors of this century, if they did not professedly favour the progress of Christianity, yet neither did they oppress its followers, nor retard its advancement.

The number of Christians increased.

IV. This clemency and benevolence, which the followers of Jesus experienced from great men, and especially from those of imperial dignity, must be placed, without doubt, among those human means that contributed to multiply the number of Christians, and to enlarge the bounds of the church. Other causes, however, both *divine* and *human*, must be added here, to render a complete and satisfactory account of this matter. Among the causes which belong to the first of these classes, we do not only reckon the intrinsic force of celestial truth, and the piety and fortitude of those who declared it to the world, but also that *especial* and *interposing providence*, which, by dreams and visions, presented to the minds of many, who were either inattentive

The causes thereof partly divine.

☞ [*d*] The authors of the Universal History have determined the question which Dr. Mosheim leaves here undecided; and they think it may be affirmed, that Philip and his son embraced the gospel, since that opinion is built upon such respectable authority as that of Jerom, Chrysostom, Dionysius of Alexandria, Zonaras, Nicephorus, Cedrenus, Ruffinus, Syncellus, Orosius, Jornandes, Ammianus Marcellinus, the learned cardinal Bona, Vincentius Lirinensis, Huetius, and others. Dr. Mosheim refers his readers, for an account of this matter to the following writers: Spanheim, *De Christianismo Philipp.* tom. ii. opp. p. 400. Entretiens *Historiques sur le Christianisme de l'Empereur Philippe, par. P. De L. F.* Mammachii *Origines et. Antiqu. Christianæ*, tom. ii. p. 252. Confer. Fabric. *De Luce Evang.* &c. p. 252.

tive to the Christian doctrine, or its professed enemies, touched their hearts with a conviction of the truth, and a sense of its importance, and engaged them, without delay, to profess themselves the disciples of Christ [*e*]. To this may also be added, the healing of diseases, and other miracles, which many Christians were yet enabled to perform by invoking the name of the divine Saviour [*f*]. The number of miracles, was, however, much less in this than the preceding century; nor must this alteration be attributed only to the divine wisdom, which rendered miraculous interpositions less frequent in proportion as they became less necessary, but also to his justice, which was provoked to diminish the frequency of gifts, which some did not scruple to pervert to mercenary purposes [*g*].

V. If we turn our view to the human means that contributed, at this time, to multiply the numbers of Christians, and to extend the limits of the church, we shall find a great variety of causes uniting their influence, and contributing jointly to this happy purpose. Among these must be reckoned the translations of the sacred writings into various languages, the zeal and labours of Origen, in spreading abroad copies of them every where, and the different works that were published, by learned and pious men, in defence of the gospel. We may add also to this, that the acts of beneficence and liberality, performed by the Christians, even towards those

Partly human.

[*e*] See, for an account of this matter, the following authors, Origen, lib. i. *adv. Celsum*, p. 35. *Homil. in Lucæ* vii. p. 216. tom. ii. opp. edit. Basil; as also Tertullian, *De anima*, cap. xiv. p. 348. edit. Rigaltii, and Eusebius, *Histor. Eccles.* lib. vi. cap. v. p. 208.

[*f*] Origen, *contr. Celsum*, lib. i. p. 5. 7. Euseb. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. v. cap. vii. Cyprianus, *Ep.* i. *ad Donat.* p. 3. and the notes of Balusius upon that passage, p. 376.

[*g*] Spencer, not. in *Origin. contra Celsum*, p. 6, 7.

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whose religious principles they abhorred, had a great influence in attracting the esteem, and removing the prejudices of many, who were thus prepared for examining with candour, the Christian doctrine, and, consequently, for receiving its divine light. The worshippers of the Pagan deities must have been destitute of every generous affection, of every humane feeling, if the view of that boundless charity, which the Christians exercised towards the poor, the love they expressed even to their enemies, the tender care they took of the sick and infirm, the humanity they discovered in the redemption of captives, and the other illustrious virtues, which rendered them so worthy of universal esteem, had not touched their hearts, dispelled their prepossessions, and rendered them more favourable to the disciples of Jesus. If, among the causes of the propagation of Christianity, there is any place due to *pious frauds*, it is certain, that they merit a very small part of the honour of having contributed to this glorious purpose; since they were practised by few, and that very seldom.

Several countries receive the light of the gospel.

VI. That the limits of the church were extended in this century, is a matter beyond all controversy. It is not, however, equally certain in what manner, by what persons, or in what parts of the world, this was effected. Origen, invited from *Alexandria* by an Arabian prince, converted, by his assiduous labours, a certain tribe of wandering Arabs to the Christian faith [*h*]. The Goths, a fierce and warlike people, who inhabited the countries of *Mysia* and *Thrace*, and who, accustomed to rapine, vexed the neighbouring provinces by perpetual incursions, received the knowledge of the gospel by the means of certain Christian doctors sent thither from

[*h*] Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. iv. cap. xix. p. 221.

from *Asia*. The holy lives of these venerable teachers, and the miraculous powers with which they were endowed, attracted the esteem, even of a people educated to nothing but plunder and devastation, and absolutely uncivilized by letters or science; and their authority and influence grew so great, and produced in process of time, such remarkable effects, that a great part of this barbarous people became the disciples of Christ, and put off in a manner, that ferocity that was become so natural to them [*i*].

Among others, Gaul and Germany.

VII. The Christian assemblies, founded in Gaul by the Asiatic doctors in the preceding century, were few in number and of very little extent; but both their number and their extent were considerably increased from the time of the emperor Decius. Under his reign Dionysius, Gatian, Trophymus, Paul, Saturninus, Martial, Stremonius, men of exemplary piety, passed into this province, and amidst dangers and trials of various kinds, erected churches at *Paris*, *Tours*, *Arles*, and several other places. This was followed by a rapid progress of the gospel among the Gauls, as the disciples of these pious teachers spread, in a short time, the knowledge of Christianity through the whole country [*k*]. We must also place in this century the origin of several German churches, such as those of *Cologn*, *Treves*, *Mentz*, and others, of which Eucharius, Valerius, Maternus, and Clemens were the principal founders [*l*]. The historians of

[*i*] Sozomenus, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. ii. cap. vi. Paulus Diaconus, *Hist. Miscell.* lib. ii. cap. xiv. Philostorgius, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. ii. cap. v. p. 470.

[*k*] See the history of the *Francks* by Gregory de Tours, book i. ch. xxviii. p. 23. Theodor. Ruinart. *Acta Martyr. sincera*, p. 109.

[*l*] See Aug. Calmet, *Hist. de Lorraine*, tom. i. dissert. i. p. 7. Jo. Nicol. ab Hontheim, *Historiæ Trevirensis*, tom. i. ubi *Diss. de æra fundati Episcopatus Trevirensis*

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Scotland inform us, that the light of Christianity arose upon that country during this century; but, though there be nothing improbable in this assertion, yet it is not built upon incontestable authority [*m*].

CHAP. II.

Concerning the calamitous events which happened to the church in this century.

The persecution under Severus.

I. IN the beginning of this century, the Christian church suffered calamities of various kinds throughout the provinces of the Roman empire. These sufferings increased in a terrible manner, in consequence of a law made, in the year 203, by the emperor Severus (who, in other respects, was certainly no enemy to the Christians,) by which every subject of the empire was prohibited to change the religion of his ancestors for that of the Christian or Jewish [*n*]. This law was, in its effects, most prejudicial to the Christians; for, though it did not formally condemn them, and seemed only adapted to put a stop to the further progress of the gospel, yet it induced rapacious and unjust magistrates to persecute even unto death the poorer sort among the Christians, that thus the richer might be led, through fear of like treatment, to purchase their tranquillity and safety at an expensive rate. Hence many of the disciples of Christ, both in *Egypt*, and also in several parts of *Asia* and *Africa*, were

[*m*] See Usher et Stillingfleet, *Antiquit. et Origen. Ecclesiar. Brit.* See also George Mackenzie, *De Regali Scotorum prosapia*, cap. viii. p. 119.

[*n*] Eusebius, *Eccles. Histor.* lib. vi. cap. i. Spartianus *in Severo*, cap. xvi. xvii. p. 617.

were put to death in consequence of this law. Among these Leonidas, the father of Origen, Perpetua and Felicitas (those two famous African ladies, whose *acts* [o] are come down to our times,) Potamiena Marcella, and other martyrs of both sexes acquired an illustrious name by the magnanimity and tranquillity with which they endured the most cruel sufferings.

That under Maximin.

II. From the death of Severus to the reign of Maximin, the condition of the Christians was, in some places, prosperous, and, in all, supportable. But with Maximin the face of affairs changed. This unworthy emperor, having animated the Roman soldiers to assassinate Alexander Severus, dreaded the resentment of the Christians, whom that excellent prince had favoured and protected in a distinguished manner; and, for this reason, he ordered the bishops, whom he knew that Alexander had always treated as his intimate friends, to be seized and put to death [p]. During his reign, the Christians suffered in the most barbarous manner; for, though the edict of this tyrant extended only to the bishops and leaders of the Christian church, yet its shocking effects reached much farther; as it animated the heathen priests, the magistrates, and the multitude, against Christians of every rank and order [q].

Many Christians in consequence of the cruelty of Decius, become chargeable with defection.

III. This storm was succeeded by a calm, in which the Christians enjoyed an happy tranquillity for many years. The accession of Decius Trajan to the imperial throne, in the year 249, raised a new tempest, in which the fury of persecution fell in a dreadful manner upon the church

[o] Theod. Ruinart, *Acta Martyr.* p. 90.

[p] Euseb. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. vi. cap. xxviii. p. 225. Orosius, *Hist.* lib. vii. cap. xix. p. 509.

[q] Origen. tom. xxviii. in Matth. opp. tom. i. p. 137. See also Firmilianus, in Cypriani, *Epistolis,* p. 140.

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church of Christ. For this emperor, either from an ill-grounded fear of the Christians, or from a violent zeal for the superstition of his ancestors, published most terrible and cruel edicts; by which the prætors were ordered, upon pain of death, either to extirpate the whole body of Christians without exception, or to force them, by torments of various kinds, to return to the Pagan worship. Hence in all the provinces of the empire, multitudes of Christians were, during the space of two years, put to death by the most horrid punishments [*r*], which an ingenious barbarity could invent. The most unhappy circumstance of all these cruelties was, their fatal influence upon the faith and constancy of many of the sufferers; for as this persecution was much more terrible than all those that preceded it, so a great number of Christians, dismayed, not at the approach of death, but at the aspect of those dreadful and lingering torments, which a barbarous magistracy had prepared to combat their constancy, fell from the profession of their faith, and secured themselves from punishment, either by *offering sacrifices*, or by *burning incense*, before the images of the gods, or by purchasing *certificates* from the Pagan priests. Hence arose the opprobrious names of Sacrificati, given to those who *sacrificed;* Thurificati, to those who *burned incense;* and Libellatici, to those who *produced certificates* [*s*]. IV.

[*r*] Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. vi. cap. xxxix. p. 234. cap. xli. p. 238. Gregorius Nyss. *in vita Thaumaturgi*, tom. iii. opp. p. 568. Cyprianus, *De Lapsis.* p. 182.

☞ [*s*] These *certificates* were not all equally criminal, nor supposed all a degree of apostasy equally enormous. It is therefore necessary to advertise the reader of the following distinctions omitted by Dr. Mosheim: These certificates were sometimes no more than a permission to abstain from sacrificing, obtained by a fee given to the judges, and were not looked upon as an act of apostasy, unless the Christians, who demanded

IV. This defection of such a prodigious number of Christians under Decius, was the occasion of great commotions in the church, and produced debates of a very difficult and delicate nature. For the *lapsed*, or those that had fallen from their Christian profession, were desirous to be restored to church-communion, without submitting to that painful course of *penitential* discipline, which the ecclesiastical laws indispensably required. The bishops were divided upon this matter: some were for shewing the desired indulgence, while others opposed it with all their might [*t*]. In *Egypt* and *Africa*, many, in order to obtain more speedily the pardon of their apostasy, interested the *martyrs* in their behalf, and received from them *letters of reconciliation and peace* *, i. e. a formal act, by which they (the martyrs) declared in their last moments, that they looked upon them as worthy of their communion, and desired, of consequence, that they should be restored to their place among the brethren. Some bishops and presbyters re-admitted into the church, with too much facility, apostates and transgressors, who produced such testimonies as these. But Cyprian, bishop of *Carthage*, a man of severe wisdom, and great dignity of character, acted in quite another way. Though he had no intention to

Warm contests occasioned by the defection of Christians.

* Libelles Pacis.

demanded them, had declared to the judges that they had conformed themselves to the emperor's edicts. But, at other times, they contained a profession of paganism, and were either offered voluntarily by the apostate, or were subscribed by him, when they were presented to him by the persecuting magistrates. Many used certificates, as letters of security, obtained from the priests at a high rate, and which dispensed them from either professing or denying their sentiments. See Spanheim. *Historia Christiana*, p. 732, 733. See also Prud. Maranus *in vita Cypriani*, operibus ejus præmissa, sect. 6. p. 54.

[*t*] Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. vi. cap. xliv. Cypr. *Epistolæ*, in many places.

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to derogate from the authority of the venerable martyrs, yet he opposed with vigour this unreasonable lenity, and set limits to the efficacy of these letters of reconciliation and peace. Hence arose a keen dispute between him and the martyrs, confessors, presbyters, and lapsed, seconded by the people; and yet, notwithstanding this formidable multitude of adversaries, the venerable bishop came off victorious [*u*].

The persecutions under Gallus and Volusianus.

V. Gallus, the successor of Decius, and Volusianus, son of the former, re-animated the flame of persecution, which was beginning to burn with less fury [*w*]. And, besides the sufferings which the Christians had to undergo in consequence of their cruel edicts, they were also involved in the public calamities that prevailed at this time, and suffered grievously from a terrible pestilence, which spread desolation through many provinces of the empire [*x*]. This pestilence also was an occasion which the Pagan priests used with dexterity to renew the rage of persecution against them, by persuading the people that it was on account of the lenity used toward the Christians, that the gods sent down their judgments upon the nations. In the year 254, Valerian being declared emperor, made the fury of persecution cease, and restored the church to a state of tranquillity.

Under Valerian.

VI. The clemency and benevolence which Valerian shewed to the Christians, continued until the fifth year of his reign. Then the scene began

[*u*] The whole history of this controversy may be gathered from the epistles of Cyprian. See also Gabr. Albaspinæus, *Observat. Eccles.* lib. i. observ. xx. p. 94. Dallæus *De pœnis et satisfactionibus humanis,* lib. vii. cap. xvi. p. 706.

[*w*] Euseb. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. vii. cap. i. p. 250. Cyprian. *Epist.* lvii. lviii.

[*x*] Vid. Cypriani *Lib. ad Demetrianum.*

began to change, and the change indeed was sudden. Macrianus, a superstitious and cruel bigot to paganism, had gained an entire ascendant over Valerian, and was his chief counsellor in every thing that related to the administration of the government. By the persuasion of this imperious minister, the Christians were prohibited to assemble themselves together, and their bishops and doctors were sent into banishment. This edict was published in the year 257, and was followed the year after, by one still more severe; in consequence of which, a considerable number of Christians, in all the different provinces of the empire, were put to death, and that by such cruel methods of execution, as were much more terrible than death itself. Of those that suffered in this persecution, the most eminent were Cyprian, bishop of *Carthage;* Sixtus, bishop of *Rome;* and Laurentius, a Roman deacon, who was barbarously consumed by a slow and lingering fire. An unexpected event suspended, for a while, the sufferings of the Christians. Valerian was made prisoner in the war against the Persians; and his son Gallienus, in the year 260, restored peace to the church [*y*].

The state of the church under Gallienus, Claudius, and Aurelian.

VII. The condition of the Christians was rather supportable than happy, under the reign of Gallienus, which lasted eight years; as also under the short administration of his successor Claudius. Nor did they suffer much during the first four years of the reign of Aurelian, who was raised to the empire in the year 270. But the fifth year of this emperor's administration would have proved fatal to them, had not his violent

[*y*] Euseb. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. vii. cap. x, xi. p. 255. *Acta Cypriani* as they are to be found in the *Acta Martyrum* Ruinarti, p. 216. Cypriani *Epist.* lxxvii. p. 158. edit. Baluz. lxxxii. p. 165.

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violent death, prevented the execution of his cruel purposes. For while, set on by the unjust suggestions of his own superstition, or by the barbarous counsels of a bigotted priesthood, he was preparing a formidable attack upon the Christians, he was obliged to march into Gaul, where he was murdered, in the year 275, before his edicts were published throughout the empire [z]. Few, therefore, suffered martyrdom under his reign, and indeed, during the remainder of this century, the Christians enjoyed a considerable measure of ease and tranquillity. They were, at least, free from any violent attacks of oppression and injustice, except in a small number of cases, where the avarice and superstition of the Roman magistrates interrupted their tranquillity [a].

The attempts of the philosophers against Christianity.

VIII. While the Roman emperors and proconsuls employed against the Christians the terror of unrighteous edicts, and the edge of the destroying sword, the Platonic philosophers, who have been described above, exhausted against Christianity all the force of their learning and eloquence, and all the resources of their art and dexterity, in rhetorical declamations, subtle writings, and ingenious stratagems. These artful adversaries were so much the more dangerous and formidable, as they had adopted several of the doctrines and institutions of the gospel, and with a specious air of moderation and impartiality, were attempting, after the example of their master Ammonius, to reconcile paganism with Christianity, and to form a sort of coalition of the

[z] Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. vii. cap. xxx. Lactantius, *De mortibus Persequutor.* cap. vi.

[a] Among these vexations may be reckoned the cruelty of Galerius Maximian, who, towards the conclusion of this century, persecuted the ministers of his court, and the soldiers of his army who had professed Christianity. See Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. viii. cap. i. p. 292. iv. p. 295. 317.

the ancient and the new religion. These philosophers had at their head, in this century, Porphyry, a *Syrian*, or, as some allege, a *Tyrian*, by birth, who wrote against the Christians a long and laborious work, which was destroyed afterwards by an imperial edict [*b*]. He was, undoubtedly, a writer of great dexterity, genius, and erudition, as those of his works that yet remain sufficiently testify. But those very works, and the history of his life, shew us, at the same time, that he was much more virulent, than a formidable enemy to the Christians. For by them it appears, that he was much more attentive to the suggestions of a superstitious spirit, and the visions of a lively fancy, than to the sober dictates of right reason and a sound judgment. And it may be more especially observed of the fragments that yet remain of his work against the Christians, that they are equally destitute of judgment and equity, and are utterly unworthy of a wise and a good man [*c*].

Comparisons drawn between the philosophers and Christ.

IX. Many were the deceitful and perfidious stratagems by which this sect endeavoured to obscure

[*b*] See Holstenius, *De vita Porphyr.* cap. xi. Fabric. *Lux. Evang.* p. 154. Buddeus, *Isagoge in Theologiam*, tom. ii. p. 1009.

☞ [*c*] This work of Porphyry against the Christians was burnt by an edict of Constantine the Great. It was divided into fifteen books, as we find in Eusebius, and contained the blackest calumnies against the Christians. The *first* book treated of the contradictions which he pretended to have found in the sacred writings. The greatest part of the *twelfth* is employed in fixing the time when the prophecies of Daniel were written. For Porphyry himself found these prophecies so clearly and evidently fulfilled, that, to avoid the force of the argument, deducible from thence in favour of Christianity, he was forced to have recourse to this absurd supposition, that *these prophecies had been published under the name of* Daniel, by one who lived in the time of Antiochus, and wrote after the arrival of the events foretold. Methodius, Eusebius, and Apollinaris, wrote against Porphyry. But these refutations have been long since lost.

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scure the lustre, and to diminish the authority of the Christian doctrine. But none of these were more dangerous than the seducing artifice with which they formed a comparison between the life, actions, and miracles of Christ, and the history of the ancient philosophers; and placed the contending parties in such fallacious points of view, as to make the pretended sages of antiquity appear in nothing inferior to the divine Saviour. With this view, Archytas of *Tarentum*, Pythagoras, of whom Porphyry wrote the life, Apollonius Tyanæus, a Pythagorean philosopher, whose miracles and peregrinations were highly celebrated by the vulgar, were brought upon the scene, and exhibited as divine teachers, and rivals of the glory of the Son of God. Philostratus, one of the most eminent rhetoricians of this age, composed a pompous history of the life of Apollonius, who was little else than a cunning knave, and did nothing but ape the austerity and sanctity of Pythagoras. This history appears manifestly designed to draw a parallel between Christ and the philosopher of *Tyana;* but the impudent fictions, and the ridiculous fables, with which this work is filled, must, one would think, have rendered it incapable of deceiving any who were possessed of a sound mind; any, but such as, through the corruption of vicious prejudices, were willing to be deceived [*d*].

The pernicious consequences of this comparison.

X. But as there are no opinions, however absurd, and no stories, however idle and improbable, that a weak and ignorant multitude, who are more attentive to the pomp of *words*, than to the truth of *things*, will not easily swallow; so it happened, that many were ensnared by the absurd attempts of

[*d*] See Olearius' preface to the life of Apollonius, by Philostratus; as also Mosheim's notes to his Latin translation of Cudworth's *Intellectual System*, p. 304. 309. 311. 334.

of these insidious philosophers. Some were induced by these perfidious stratagems to abandon the Christian religion, which they had embraced. Others, when they heard that true Christianity (as it was taught by Jesus, and not as it was afterwards corrupted by his disciples) differed almost in nothing from the Pagan religion, properly explained and restored to its primitive purity, determined to remain in the religion of their ancestors, and in the worship of their gods. A third sort were led, by these comparisons between Christ and the ancient philosophers, to form to themselves a motley system of religion composed of the tenets of both parties, whom they treated with the same veneration and respect. Such was, particularly, the method of Alexander Severus, who paid indiscriminately divine honours to Christ and to Orpheus, to Apollonius, and the other philosophers and heroes whose names were famous in ancient times.

The attempts of the Jews against the Christians.

XI. The credit and power of the Jews were now too much diminished to render them as capable of injuring the Christians, by their influence upon the magistrates, as they had formerly been. This did not, however, discourage their malicious efforts, as the books which Tertullian and Cyprian have written against them abundantly shew, with several other writings of the Christian doctors, who complained of the malignity of the Jews, and of their perfidious stratagems [*e*]. During the persecution under Severus, a certain person called Dominius, who had embraced Christianity, deserted to the Jews, doubtless, to avoid the punishments that were decreed against the Christians; and it was to recal this apostate to his duty and his profession, that Serapion, bishop of *Antioch*, wrote

[*e*] Hypolytus, *Serm. in Susan. et Daniel.* tom. i. opp. p. 274. 276.

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wrote a particular treatise against the Jews [*f*]. We may, however, conclude from this instance, that when the Christians were persecuted, the Jews were treated with less severity and contempt, on account of their enmity against the disciples of Jesus. And from the same fact we may also learn, that though they were in a state of great subjection and abasement, yet they were not entirely deprived of all power of oppressing the Christians.

[*f*] Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. vi. cap. xii. p. 213.

PART II.

The INTERNAL HISTORY of the CHURCH.

CHAP. I.

Concerning the state of letters and philosophy during this century.

The decay of learning.

I. THE arts and sciences, which, in the preceding century, were in a declining state, seemed, in this, ready to expire, and had now lost all their vigour, and all their lustre. The celebrated rhetorician Longinus, and the eminent historian Dion Cassius, with a few others, were the last among the Greeks, who stood in the breach against the prevailing ignorance and barbarism of the times. Men of learning and genius were less numerous still in the western provinces of the empire, though there were, in several places flourishing schools erected for the advancement of the sciences, and the culture of taste and genius. Different reasons contributed to this decay of learning. Few of the emperors patronized the sciences, or encouraged, by the prospect of their favour and protection, that emulation, which is the soul of the republic of letters. Besides, the civil wars that almost always distracted the empire, were extremely unfavourable to the pursuit of science, and the perpetual incursions of the barbarous nations interrupted that leisure and tranquillity which are so essential to the progress of learning and knowledge, and extinguished, among a people accustomed to nothing almost but the din of arms, all desire of literary acquisitions [*g*].

[*g*] See the *Literary History of France*, by the Benedictine monks, vol. i. part II. p. 317.

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The state of philosophy, principally the Platonic.

II. If we turn our eyes towards the state of philosophy, the prospect will appear somewhat less desolate and comfortless. There were, as yet, in several of the Grecian sects, men of considerable knowledge and reputation, of whom Longinus has mentioned the greatest part [*h*]. But all these sects were gradually eclipsed by the school of Ammonius, whose origin and doctrines have been considered above. This victorious sect, which was formed in *Egypt*, issued forth from thence with such a rapid progress, that, in a short time, it extended itself almost throughout the Roman empire, and drew into its *vortex* the greatest part of those who applied themselves, through inclination, to the study of philosophy. This amazing progress was due to Plotinus, the most eminent disciple of Ammonius, a man of a most subtle invention, and endowed by nature with a genius capable of the most profound researches, and equal to the investigation of the most abstruse and difficult subjects. This penetrating and sublime philosopher taught publicly, first in *Persia*, and afterwards at *Rome*, and in *Campania;* in all which places the youth flocked in crowds to receive his instruction. He comprehended the precepts of his philosophy in several books, the most of which are yet extant [*i*].

Plotinus.

His doctrine universally propagated.

III. The number of disciples that were formed in the school of Plotinus, is almost beyond credibility. The most famous of them was Porphyry [*k*], who spread abroad through *Sicily*, and many

[*h*] In his life of Plotinus, epitomized by Porphyry, ch. xx. p. 128. edit. Fabricii.

[*i*] See Porphyrii *vita Plotini*, of which Fabricius has given an edition in his *Bibliotheca Græca*, tom. iv. p. 91. Bayle's *Diction.* tom. iii. at the article Plotinus; as also Brucker's *Historia Critica Philosophiæ.*

☞ [*k*] Porphyry was first the disciple of Longinus, author of the justly celebrated *Treatise on the Sublime.* But having passed

many other countries, the doctrine of his master, received with great accuracy, adorned with the graces of a flowing and elegant style, and enriched with new inventions and curious improvements [*l*]. From the time of Ammonius, until the sixth century, this was almost the only system of philosophy that was publicly taught at *Alexandria*. A certain philosopher, whose name was Plutarch, having learned it there, brought it into *Greece*, and renewed, at *Athens*, the celebrated *Academy*, from whence issued a set of illustrious philosophers, whom we shall have occasion to mention in the progress of this work [*m*].

Different sects of this philosophy.

IV. We have unfolded above, the nature and doctrines of this philosophy, as far as was compatible with the brevity of our present design. It is, however, proper to add here, that its votaries were not all of the same sentiments, but thought very differently upon a variety of subjects. This difference of opinion was the natural consequence of that fundamental law, which the whole sect was obliged to keep constantly in view, *viz. That truth was to be pursued with the utmost liberty, and to be collected from all the different systems in which it lay dispersed.* Hence it happened, that the Athenians rejected certain opinions that were entertained by the philosophers of *Alexandria*. None, however, who were ambitious to be ranked among these new Platonists, called in question the main doctrines which formed the ground-work of their singular system; those, for example, which regarded the *existence of one God; the fountain of all things: the eternity of the world; the dependence*

passed from *Greece* to *Rome*, where he heard Plotinus, he was so charmed with the genius and penetration of this philosopher, that he attached himself entirely to him. See Plotin. *vit.* p. 3. Eunap. cap. ii. p. 17.

[*l*] Holstenius *vit. Porphyrii.* republished in the *Bibliotheca Græca* of Fabricius.

[*m*] Marini *vita. Procli,* cap. xi, xii. p. 25.

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of matter upon the Supreme Being; the *nature of souls;* the *plurality of gods;* the *method of interpreting the popular superstitions,* &c.

The state of learning among the Christians.

V. The famous question concerning the excellence and utility of human learning, was now debated with great warmth among the Christians; and the contending parties, in this controversy, seemed hitherto of equal force in point of numbers, or nearly so. Many recommended the study of philosophy, and an acquaintance with the Greek and Roman literature; while others maintained, that these were pernicious to the interests of genuine Christianity, and the progress of true piety. The cause of letters and philosophy triumphed, however, by degrees; and those who wished well to them, gained ground more and more, till at length the superiority was manifestly decided in their favour. This victory was principally due to the influence and authority of Origen, who having been early instructed in the new kind of Platonism already mentioned, blended it unhappily with the purer and more sublime tenets of a celestial doctrine, and recommended it in the warmest manner, to the youth who attended his public lessons. The fame of this philosopher increased daily among the Christians; and, in proportion to his rising credit, his method of proposing and explaining the doctrines of Christianity gained authority, till it became almost universal. Besides, some of the disciples of Plotinus having embraced Christianity, on condition that they should be allowed to retain such of the opinions of their master as they thought of superior excellence and merit [*n*], this must also have contributed, in some measure, to turn the balance in favour of the sciences. These Christian philosophers

[*n*] Augustinus, *Epistola* lvi. *ad Dioscor.* p. 260. tom. ii. opp.

phers preserving still a fervent zeal for the doctrines of their Heathen chief, would naturally embrace every opportunity of spreading them abroad, and instilling them into the minds of the ignorant and the unwary.

CHAP. II.

Concerning the doctors and ministers of the church, and its form of government, during this century.

I. THE form of ecclesiastical government that had been adopted by Christians in general, had now acquired greater degrees of stability and force, both in particular churches, and in the universal society of Christians collectively considered. It appears incontestable, from the most authentic records, and the best histories of this century, that, in the larger cities, there was, at the head of each church, a person to whom was given the title of *bishop*, who ruled this sacred community with a certain sort of authority, in concert, however, with the body of *presbyters*, and consulting, in matters of moment, the opinion and the voices of the whole assembly [*o*]. It is also equally evident, that, in every province, *one* bishop was invested with a certain superiority over the rest, in point of rank and authority. This was necessary to the maintenance of that *association* of churches that had been introduced in the preceding century; and contributed, moreover, to facilitate the holding of *general councils*, and to give a certain degree of order and consistence to their proceedings.

Of the form of church-government.

[*o*] A satisfactory account of this matter may be seen in Blondelli *Apologia pro Sententia Hieronymi de Episopis et Presbyteris*, p. 136. as that author has collected all the testimonies of the ancients relative to that subject.

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ceedings. It must, at the same time, be carefully observed, that the rights and privileges of these *primitive bishops* were not every where accurately fixed, nor determined in such a manner as to prevent encroachments and disputes; nor does it appear, that the chief authority in the province, was always conferred upon that bishop who presided over the church established in the metropolis. It is further to be noticed, as a matter beyond all dispute, that the bishops of *Rome*, *Antioch*, and *Alexandria*, considered as rulers of primitive and apostolic churches, had a kind of pre-eminence over all others, and were not only consulted frequently in affairs of a difficult and momentous nature, but were also distinguished by peculiar rights and privileges.

The power and dignity of the bishop of Rome in this century; what?

II. With respect, particularly, to the bishop of *Rome*, he is supposed by Cyprian to have had, at this time, a certain pre-eminence in the church [*p*]; nor does he stand alone in this opinion. But it is to be carefully observed, that even those, who, with Cyprian, attributed this pre-eminence to the Roman prelate, insisted, at the same time, with the utmost warmth, upon the *equality*, in point of *dignity* and *authority*, that subsisted among all the members of the episcopal order. In consequence of this opinion of an *equality* among all Christian bishops, they rejected, with contempt, the judgment of the *bishop of Rome*, when they thought it ill founded or unjust, and followed their own sense of things with a perfect independence. Of this Cyprian himself gave an eminent example, in his famous controversy with Stephen bishop of *Rome*, concerning the *baptism of heretics*, in which he treated the arrogance of that imperious prelate with a noble indignation,

[*p*] Cyprian, *Ep.* lxxiii. p. 131. *Ep.* lv. p. 86. Ib. *De Unitate Ecclesiæ.* p. 195. edit. Baluzii.

dignation, and also with a perfect contempt. Whoever, therefore, compares all these things together, will easily perceive, that the *pre-eminence* of the bishop of *Rome*, was a pre-eminence of *order* and *association* [*q*], and not of *power* and *authority*. Or, to explain the matter yet more clearly, the pre-eminence of the bishop of *Rome*, in the universal church, was such as that of Cyprian, bishop of *Carthage*, was in the African churches. And every one knows, that the precedence of this latter prelate diminished in nothing the equality that subsisted among all the African bishops, invalidated in no instance their rights and liberties; but gave only to Cyprian, as the president of their general assemblies, a power of calling councils, of presiding in them, of admonishing his brethren in a mild and fraternal manner, and of executing, in short, such offices as the *order* and purposes of these ecclesiastical meetings necessarily required [*r*].

The government of the church degenerates into a monarchical form.

III. The face of things began now to change in the Christian church. The ancient method of ecclesiastical government seemed, in general, still to subsist, while, at the same time, by imperceptible steps, it varied from the primitive rule, and degenerated towards the form of a religious monarchy. For the bishops aspired to higher degrees of power and authority than they had formerly possessed; and not only violated the rights of

☞ [*q*] So I have translated *Principatus ordinis et consociationis*, which could not be otherwise rendered without a long circumlocution. The *pre-eminence* here mentioned signifies the right of *convening councils, of presiding in them, of collecting voices*, and such other things as were essential to the *order* of these assemblies.

[*r*] See Steph. Balusii *adnot. ad Cypriani Epistolas*, p. 387. 389. 400. Consult particularly the seventy-first and seventy-third epistles of Cyprian, and the fifty-fifth, addressed to Cornelius, bishop of *Rome*, in which letters the Carthaginian prelate pleads with warmth and vehemence for the equality of all Christian bishops.

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of the people, but also made gradual encroachments upon the privileges of the presbyters. And that they might cover these usurpations with an air of justice, and an appearance of reason, they published new doctrines concerning the nature of the church, and of the episcopal dignity, which, however, were, in general so obscure, that they themselves seem to have understood them as little as those to whom they were delivered. One of the principal authors of this change, in the government of the church, was Cyprian, who pleaded for the power of the bishops with more zeal and vehemence than had ever been hitherto employed in that cause, though not with an unshaken constancy and perseverance; for, in difficult and perilous times, necessity sometimes obliged him to yield, and to submit several things to the judgment and authority of the church.

The vices of the clergy.

IV. This change in the form of ecclesiastical government, was soon followed by a train of vices, which dishonoured the character and authority of those to whom the administration of the church was committed. For, though several yet continued to exhibit to the world illustrious examples of primitive piety and Christian virtue, yet many were sunk in luxury and voluptuousness, puffed up with vanity, arrogance, and ambition, possessed with a spirit of contention and discord, and addicted to many other vices that cast an undeserved reproach upon the holy religion, of which they were the unworthy professors and ministers. This is testified in such an ample manner, by the repeated complaints of many of the most respectable writers of this age [*s*], that truth will not permit us to spread the veil, which we should otherwise be desirous to cast over such enormities among an order

[*s*] Origen. *Comm. in Matthæum,* par. I. opp. p. 420. 441. 442. Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. viii. cap. i. p. 291, &c.

order so sacred. The *bishops* assumed, in many places, a princely authority, particularly those who had the greatest number of churches under their inspection, and who presided over the most opulent assemblies. They appropriated to their evangelical function the splendid ensigns of temporal majesty. A throne, surrounded with ministers, exalted above his equals the servant of the meek and humble Jesus; and sumptuous garments dazzled the eyes and the minds of the multitude into an ignorant veneration for their arrogated authority. The example of the bishops was ambitiously imitated by the *presbyters*, who, neglecting the sacred duties of their station, abandoned themselves to the indolence and delicacy of an effeminate and luxurious life. The *deacons*, beholding the presbyters deserting thus their functions, boldly usurped their rights and privileges; and the effects of a corrupt ambition were spread through every rank of the sacred order.

Hence the lesser orders.

V. From what has been now observed, we may come, perhaps, at the true origin of *minor*, or lesser *orders*, which were, in this century added everywhere to those of the *bishops*, *presbyters*, and *deacons*. For, certainly, the titles, and offices of *subdeacons*, *acolythi*, *ostiarii*, or door-keepers, *readers*, *exorcists*, and *copiatæ*, would never have been heard of in the church, if its rulers had been assiduously and zealously employed in promoting the interests of truth and piety, by their labours, and their example. But when the honours and privileges of the bishops and presbyters were augmented, the *deacons* also began to extend their ambitious views, and to despise those lower functions and employments which they had hitherto exercised with such humility and zeal. The additional orders that were now created to diminish the labours of the present rulers of the church, had functions allotted to

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to them, which their names partly explain [*t*]. The institution of *exorcists* was a consequence of the doctrine of the New Platonists, which the Christians adopted, and which taught, that the evil *genii*, or spirits were continually hovering over human bodies, towards which they were carried by a natural and vehement desire; and that vicious men were not so much impelled to sin by an innate depravity, or by the seduction of example,

☞ [*t*] The *subdeacons* were designed to ease the *deacons* of the meanest part of their work. Their office, consequently, was to prepare the sacred vessels of the altar, and to deliver them to the deacons in time of divine service; to attend the doors of the church during the communion service, to go on the bishop's embassies with his letters or messages to foreign churches. In a word, they were so subordinate to the superior rulers of the church, that, by a canon of the council of *Laodicea*, they were forbidden to sit in the presence of a *deacon* without his leave.—The order of *acolythi* was peculiar to the Latin church; for there was no such order in the Greek church during the four first centuries. Their name signifies *attendants;* and their principal office was to light the candles of the church, and to attend the ministers with wine for the eucharist. The *ostiarii* or *door-keepers* were appointed to open and shut the doors, as officers and servants under the *deacons* and *subdeacons;* to give notice of the times of prayer and church assemblies, which in time of persecution required a private signal for fear of discovery; and that probably, was the first reason for instituting this order in the church of *Rome*, whose example, by degrees was soon followed by other churches.—The *readers* were those that were appointed to read the scripture in that part of divine service to which the *catechumens* were admitted.—The *exorcists* were appointed to drive out evil spirits from the bodies of persons possessed; they had been long known in the church, but were not erected into an ecclesiastical order until the latter end of the third century. The *copiatæ*, or *fossarii*, were an order of the inferior clergy, whose business it was to take care of funerals and to provide for the decent interment of the dead. In vain have Baronius and other Romish writers asserted, that these inferior orders were of apostolical institution. The contrary is evidently proved, since none of these offices are mentioned as having taken place before the third century, and the origin can be traced no higher than the fourth.

ample, as by the internal suggestions of some evil dæmon. The *Copiatæ* were employed in providing for the decent interment of the dead.

Marriage of the clergy.

VI. Marriage was permitted to all the various ranks and orders of the clergy, high and low. Those, however, who continued in a state of celibacy, obtained by this abstinence a higher reputation of sanctity and virtue than others. This was owing to an almost general persuasion, that they, who took wives, were of all others the most subject to the influence of malignant dæmons [*u*]. And as it was of infinite importance to the interests of the church, that no impure or malevolent spirit entered into the bodies of such as were appointed to govern, or to instruct others, so the people were desirous that the clergy should use their utmost efforts to abstain from the pleasures of the conjugal life. Many of the sacred order especially in *Africa*, consented to satisfy the desires of the people, and endeavoured to do this in such a manner as not to offer an entire violence to their own inclinations. For this purpose, they formed connections with those women who had made vows of perpetual chastity; and it was an ordinary thing for an ecclesiastic to admit one of these fair saints to the participation of his bed, but still under the most solemn declarations, that nothing passed in this commerce that was contrary to the rules of chastity and virtue [*w*]. These holy concubines were called by the Greeks, Συνεισάκτοι; and by the Latins, *Mulieres subintroductæ*. This indecent custom alarmed the zeal of the more pious among the bishops, who employed the utmost efforts of their severity and vigilance to abolish

Concubines introduced among the clergy.

[*u*] Porrhyrius, περὶ ἀποχῆς, lib. iv. p. 417.

[*w*] *Credat Judæus Apella.* See however Dodwell. *Dissertia Cyprianica,* and Lud. An. Muratorius *Diss. de Synisactis et Agapetis,* in his *Anecdot. Græc.* p. 218.; as also Baluzius *ad Cypriani Epistol.* p. 5, 12. &c.

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abolish it, though it was a long time before they entirely effected this laudable purpose.

The principal Greek and oriental writers.

VII. Thus we have given a short, though not a very pleasing view of the rulers of the church during this century; and should now mention the principal writers that distinguished themselves in it by their learned and pious productions. The most eminent of these, whither we consider the extent of his fame, or the multiplicity of his labours, was Origen, a *presbyter* and *catechist* of *Alexandria*, a man of vast and uncommon abilities, and the greatest luminary of the Christian world that this age exhibited to view. Had the justness of his judgment been equal to the immensity of his genius, the fervour of his piety, his indefatigable patience, his extensive erudition, and his other eminent and superior talents, all encomiums must have fallen short of his merit. Yet such as he was, his virtues and his labours deserve the admiration of all ages; and his name will be transmitted with honour through the annals of time, as long as learning and genius shall be esteemed among men [*x*].

The second in renown, among the writers of this century, was Julius Africanus, a native of *Palestine*, a man of the most profound erudition, but the greatest part of whose learned labours are unhappily lost.

Hippolytus, whose history is much involved in darkness [*y*], is also esteemed among the most celebrated authors and martyrs of this age; but those writings which at present bear his name, are

[*x*] See a very learned and useful work of the famous Huet, bishop of *Avranches*, intitled, *Origeniana*. See also, Doucin, *Histoire d' Origene et des mouvemens arrivés dans l' Eglise au sujet de sa doctrine;* and Bayle's *Dictionary*, at the article Origen.

[*y*] The Benedictine monks have, with great labour and erudition, endeavoured to dispel this darkness in their *Histoire Litteraire de la France*, tom. i. p. 361.

are justly looked upon by many as either extremely corrupted, or entirely spurious.

Gregory, bishop of *New Cæsarea,* acquired, at this time, the title of *Thaumaturgus,* i. e. wonder-worker, on account of the variety of great and signal miracles which he is said to have wrought during the course of his ministry. Few of his works have come down to our times, and his miracles are called in question by many, as unsupported by sufficient evidence [*z*].

It were to be wished that we had more of the writings of Dionysius, bishop of *Alexandria,* than those which have survived the ruins of time, since the few remaining fragments of his works discover the most consummate wisdom and prudence, and the most amiable spirit of moderation and candour, and thus abundantly vindicate, from all suspicion of flattery, the ancients who mentioned him under the title of Dionysius the Great [*a*].

Methodius appears to have been a man of great piety, and highly respectable on account of his eminent virtue; but those of his works which are yet extant discover no great degree of penetration and acuteness in handling controversy and weighing opinions.

VIII. Cyprian, bishop of *Carthage,* a man of the most eminent abilities and flowing eloquence, stands foremost in the list of Latin writers. His letters, and indeed the most of his works, breathe such a noble and pathetic spirit of piety, that it is impossible to read them without the warmest feelings of enthusiasm. We must however observe, that he would have been a better writer, had he been less attentive to the ornaments of

The Latin writers.

[*z*] See Van Dale's preface to his Latin treatise concerning *Oracles,* p. 6.

[*a*] The history of Dionysius is particularly illustrated by Jac. Basnage, in his *Histoire de l' Eglise,* tom. i. livr. ii. cap. v. p. 68.

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of rhetoric; and a better bishop, had he been able to restrain the vehemence of his temper, and to distinguish with more acuteness, between truth and falsehood.

The *dialogue* of Minucius Felix, which bears the title of *Octavius*, effaces with such judgment, spirit, and force, the calumnies and reproaches that were cast upon the Christians by their adversaries, that it deserves an attentive perusal from those who are desirous to know the state of the church during this century.

The *Seven Books* of Arnobius, the African, written *against the Gentiles*, are a still more copious and ample defence of the Christians, and, though obscure in several places, may yet be read with pleasure and with profit. It is true, that this rhetorician, too little instructed in the Christian religion when he wrote this work, has mingled great errors with solemn and important truths; and has exhibited Christianity under a certain philosophical form, very different from that in which it is commonly received.

We refer our readers, for an account of the authors of inferior note, who lived in this century, to those who have professedly given histories or enumerations of the Christian writers.

CHAP. III.

Concerning the doctrine of the Christian church in this century.

The state of the Christian doctrine.

I. THE principal doctrines of Christianity were now explained to the people in their native purity and simplicity, without any mixture of abstract reasonings or subtile inventions; nor were the feeble minds of the multitude loaded with a great

great variety of precepts [*b*]. But the Christian doctors who had applied themselves to the study of letters and philosophy, soon abandoned the frequented paths, and struck out into the devious wilds of fancy. The Egyptians distinguished themselves in this new method of explaining the truth. They looked upon it as a noble and a glorious task to bring the doctrines of celestial wisdom into a certain subjection to the precepts of their philosophy, and to make deep and profound researches into the intimate and hidden nature of those truths which the divine Saviour had delivered to his disciples. Origen was at the head of this speculative tribe. This great man, enchanted by the charms of the Platonic philosophy, set it up as the test of all religion; and imagined, that the reasons of each doctrine were to be found in that favourite philosophy, and their nature and extent to be determined by it [*c*]. It must be confessed, that he handled this matter with modesty and with caution; but he still gave an example to his disciples, the abuse of which could not fail to be pernicious, and under the authority of which, they would naturally indulge themselves without restraint in every wanton fancy. And so, indeed, the case was: for the disciples of Origen, breaking forth from the limits fixed by their master, interpreted, in the most licentious manner, the divine truths of religion according to the tenor of the Platonic philosophy. From these teachers the philosophical, or *scholastic theology*, as it is called, derives its origin;

[*b*] See Origen, *in Præf. libror. de Principiis,* tom. i. opp. p. 49. and lib. i. *De principiis,* cap. ii. See also Gregorii Neocæsariensis, *Expositio Fidei,* p. 11. of his works, according to the edition of Ger. Vossius.

[*c*] This is manifest from what remains of his *Stromata;* as also from his books *De principiis,* which are still preserved in a Latin translation of them by Ruffinus.

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gin; and, proceeding hence, passed through various forms and modifications according to the genius, turn, and erudition of those who embraced it.

The rise of the mystic theology.

II. The same principles gave rise to another species of *theology*, which was called *mystic*. And what must seem at first sight surprising here, is, that this *mystic theology*, though formed at the same time, and derived from the same source with the *scholastic*, yet had a natural tendency to overturn and destroy it. The authors of this *mystic* science are not known; but the principles from whence it sprung are manifest. Its first promoters proceeded from that known doctrine of the Platonic school, which also was adopted by Origen and his disciples, that *the divine nature was diffused through all human souls;* or, in other words, that the *faculty of reason*, from which proceeds the health and vigour of the mind, was an *emanation from God into the human soul, and comprehended in it the principles and elements of all truth, human and divine.* They denied that men could, by labour or study, excite this celestial flame in their breasts; and, therefore, they disapproved highly of the attempts of those, who, by definitions, abstract theorems, and profound speculations, endeavoured to form distinct notions of truth, and to discover its hidden nature. On the contrary, they maintained, that *silence, tranquillity, repose*, and *solitude*, accompanied with such acts of mortification as might tend to extenuate and exhaust the body, were the means by which the *hidden* and *internal word* was *excited* to produce its latent virtues, and to instruct men in the knowledge of divine things. For thus they reasoned: "They who behold with "a noble contempt all human affairs, who turn "away their eyes from terrestrial vanities, and shut "all the avenues of the outward senses against "the contagious influences of a material world, "must

" must necessarily return to God, when the spirit " is thus disengaged from the impediments that " prevented that happy union. And, in this " blessed frame, they not only enjoy inexpressible " raptures from their communion with the Su- " preme Being, but also are invested with the " inestimable privilege of contemplating truth " undisguised and uncorrupted in its native purity, " while others behold it in a vitiated and delusive " form."

Hence the rise of monks and hermits.

III. This method of reasoning produced strange effects, and drove many into caves and deserts, where they macerated their bodies with hunger and thirst, and submitted to all the miseries of the severest discipline that a gloomy imagination could prescribe. And it is not improbable, that Paul, the first hermit, was rather engaged by this fanatical system, than by the persecution under Decius, to fly into the most solitary deserts of *Thebais*, where he led, during the space of ninety years, a life more worthy of a savage animal, than of a rational being [*d*]. It is, however, to be observed, that though Paul is placed at the head of the order of *Hermits*, yet that unsociable manner of life was very common in *Egypt*, *Syria*, *India*, and *Mesopotamia*, not only long before his time, but even before the coming of Christ. And it is still practised among the Mahometans, as well as the Christians, in those arid and burning climates [*e*]. For the glowing atmosphere that surrounds these countries is a natural cause of that love of solitude and repose, of that indolent and melancholy disposition, that are remarkably common among their languid inhabitants.

IV. But let us turn away our eyes from these scenes of fanaticism, which are so opprobrious to

 human

[*d*] The life of this hermit was written by Jerom.

[*e*] See the travels of Lucas, in the year 1714, second volume, p. 363.

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human nature, and consider some other circumstances that belong more or less to the history of the Christian doctrine during this century. And here it is proper to mention the useful labours of those who manifested their zeal for the holy scriptures by the care they took to have accurate copies of them multiplied every where, and that at such moderate prices, as rendered them of easy purchase; as also to have them translated into various languages, and published in correct editions. Many of the more opulent among the Christians contributed generously a great part of their substance to the carrying on these pious and excellent undertakings. Pierius and Hesychius in *Egypt*, and Lucian at *Antioch*, employed much pains in correcting the copies of the *Septuagint;* and Pamphilus of *Cæsarea* laboured with great diligence and success in works of the same nature, until a glorious martyrdom finished his course. But Origen surpassed all others in diligence and assiduity; and his famous *Hexapla*, though almost entirely destroyed by the waste of time, will, even in its fragments, remain an eternal monument of the incredible application with which that great man laboured to remove those obstacles which retarded the progress of the gospel [*f*].

The zeal of many in spreading abroad the sacred writings.

V. After the encomiums we have given to Origen, who has an undoubted right to the first place among the interpreters of the scriptures in this century, it is not without a deep concern that we are obliged to add, that he also, by an unhappy method, opened a secure retreat for all sorts of errors that a wild and irregular imagination could bring forth. Having entertained a notion that it was

Origen's method of interpreting the scriptures.

[*f*] The fragments that yet remain of Origen's *Hexapla*, were collected and published, by the learned Montifaucon, in folio, at *Paris*, in 1713. See also upon this head Buddei *Isagoge in Theolog.* tom. ii. p. 1581; and Carpzovii *Critic. Sacr. Veter. Testam.* p. 574.

was extremely difficult, if not impossible to defend every thing contained in the sacred writings from the cavils of heretics and infidels, so long as they were explained *literally*, according to the real import of the terms, he had recourse to the fecundity of a lively imagination, and maintained, that the holy scriptures were to be interpreted in the same *allegorical* manner that the Platonists explained the history of the gods. In consequence of this pernicious rule of interpretation, he alleged, that the words of scripture were, in many places, absolutely void of sense; and that though in others there were, indeed, certain notions conveyed under the outward terms according to their literal force and import, yet it was not in these that the true meaning of the sacred writers was to be sought, but in a mysterious and hidden sense arising from the nature of the things themselves [*g*]. This *hidden sense* he endeavours to investigate throughout his *commentaries*, neglecting and despising, for the most part, the *outward letter;* and in this devious path he displays the most ingenious strokes of fancy, though always at the expence of truth, whose divine simplicity is scarcely discernible through the cobweb-veil of allegory [*h*]. Nor did the inventions of Origen

 end

[*g*] For a further illustration of this matter, the reader may consult the excellent preface of De la Rue, to the second volume of the works of Origen, published in folio at *Paris*, in the year 1733. An accurate and full account of Origen's method of interpreting the scripture may be found in the work intitled *Commentar. de rebus Christian. ante Constantinum M.* p. 629; where the philosophy and theology of that great man, and his controversy with Demetrius bishop of *Alexandria*, are treated of professedly, and at large.

[*h*] Origen, in his *Stromata*, book x. expresses himself in the following manner; "The source of many evils lies in ad-"hering to the carnal or *external* part of scripture. Those "who do so, shall not attain to the kingdom of God. Let "us, therefore, seek after the spirit and the substantial fruit "of

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end here. He divided this *hidden sense*, which he pursued with such eagerness, into *moral* and *mystical*, or *spiritual*. The *moral* sense of scripture displays those doctrines that relate to the inward state of the soul and the conduct of life. The *mystical*, or *spiritual sense* represents the nature, the laws, and the history of the *spiritual*, or *mystical world*. We are not yet at the end of the labyrinth; for he subdivided this *mystical* world of his own creation into two distinct regions, the one of which he called the *superior*, i. e. *heaven*: and the other the *inferior*, by which he meant the *church*. This led to another division of the *mystical sense* into an earthly, or *allegorical* sense, adapted to the inferior world, and a celestial or *anogogetical* one, adapted to the *superior* region. This chimerical method of explaining the scripture was, before Origen, received by many Christians, who were deluded into it by the example of the Jews. But as this learned man reduced it into a system, and founded it upon fixed and determined rules, he is, on that account, commonly considered as its principal author.

Other interpreters.

VI. A prodigious number of interpreters, both in this and the succeeding ages, followed the method of Origen, though with some variations; nor

"of the word, which are hidden and mysterious." And again: "The scriptures are of little use to those who understand them "as they are written." One would think it impossible that such expressions should drop from the pen of a wise man. But the philosophy, which this great man embraced with such zeal, was one of the sources of his delusion. He could not find in the Bible the opinions he had adopted, as long as he interpreted that sacred book according to its literal sense. But Plato, Aristotle, Zeno, and, indeed, the whole philosophical tribe, could not fail to obtain, for their sentiments, a place in the gospel, when it was interpreted by the wanton inventions of fancy, and upon the supposition of a *hidden sense*, to which it was possible to give all sorts of forms. Hence all who desired to model Christianity according to their fancy, or their favourite system of philosophy, embraced Origen's method of interpretation.

nor could the few, who explained the sacred writings, with judgment and a true spirit of criticism, oppose, with any success, the torrent of allegory that was overflowing the church. The *commentaries* of Hippolytus, which are yet extant, shew manifestly, that this good man was entirely addicted to the system of Origen, and the same judgment may be hazarded concerning Victorinus' *explications* of certain books of the Old and New Testament, though these explications are, long since, lost. The *translation of the Ecclesiastes* by Gregory Thaumaturgus, which is yet remaining, is not chargeable with this reproach, notwithstanding the tender and warm attachment of its author to Origen. The book of *Genesis*, and *the Song of Solomon* were explained by Methodius, whose work is lost; and Ammonius composed a *Harmony of the Gospels*.

Didactic writers in theology.

VII. The doctrinal part of theology employed the pens of many learned men in this century. In his *Stromata*, and his *four books of Elements*, Origen illustrated the greatest part of the doctrines of Christianity, or, to speak more properly, rather disguised them under the lines of a vain philosophy. These books of *elements*, or *principles*, were the first sketch that appeared of the *scholastic*, or *philosophical theology*. Something of the same nature was attempted by Theognostus, in his *seven books of Hypotyposes*, which are only known at present by the extracts of them in Photius, who represents them as the work of one who was infected with the notions of Origen. Gregory Thaumaturgus drew up a brief summary of the Christian religion, in his *Exposition of the faith*; and many treated, in a more ample manner, particular points of doctrine in opposition to the enemies and corrupters of Christianity. Thus Hippolytus wrote concerning the *deity*, the *resurrection*, *anti-christ*, and the *end of the world*;

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Methodius, concerning *free will;* and Lucian, concerning *faith.* It is doubtful in what class these productions are to be placed, as the most of them have perished among the ruins of time.

Moral writers.

VIII. Among the moral writers, the first place, after Tertullian, of whom we have already spoken above, is due to Cyprian, a prelate of eminent merit, who published several treatises concerning *patience, mortality, works, alms,* as also an *exhortation to martyrdom.* In these dissertations, there are many excellent things; but there runs through them all a general want of order, precision, and method; nor do we always find solid proofs in favour of the decisions they contain [*i*]. Origen has written many treatises of this kind, and, among others, an *exhortation* to suffer martyrdom for the truth; a subject handled by many authors in this century, but with unequal eloquence and penetration. Methodius treated of *chastity,* in a work entitled, *Symposium Virginum,* or, the *Feast of Virgins;* but this treatise is full of confusion and disorder. Dionysius handled the doctrine of *penance* and *temptations.* The other moral writers of this period are too obscure and trivial to render the mention of them necessary.

Polemic divines.

IX. The controversial writers were exceeding numerous in this century. The Pagans were attacked, and that in a victorious manner, by Minucius Felix, in his dialogue called *Octavius;* by Origen, in his writings against Celsus; by Arnobius in his *seven books against the Gentiles;* and Cyprian, in his treatise concerning the *vanity of idols.* The *chronicle* of Hippolytus, in opposition to the Gentiles; and the work of Methodius

[*i*] See Barbeyrac, *De la Morale des Peres,* chap. viii. p. 104.

thodius against Porphyry, that bitter adversary of the Christians, are both lost.

We may also reckon, in the number of the Polemic writers, those who wrote against the philosophers, or who treated any subjects that were disputed between different sects. Such was Hippolytus, who wrote against Plato, and who also treated the nicest, the most difficult, and the most controverted subjects, such as *fate*, *free-will*, and the *origin of evil*, which exercised, likewise, the pens of Methodius and other acute writers. What Hippolytus wrote against the Jews, is not come down to our times; but the work of Cyprian, upon that subject, yet remains [*k*]. Origen, Victorinus, Hippolytus, attacked, in general, all various sects and heresies that divided the church; but their labours in that immense field, have entirely disappeared; and as to those who only turned their controversial arms against some few sects, and certain particular doctrines, we think it not necessary to enumerate them here.

The vicious methods of controversy now employed.

X. It is, however, necessary to observe, that the methods now used of defending Christianity, and attacking Judaism and idolatry, degenerated much from the primitive simplicity, and the true rule of controversy. The Christian doctors, who had been educated in the schools of the rhetoricians and sophists, rashly employed the arts and evasions of their subtile masters in the service of Christianity; and, intent only upon defeating the enemy, they were too little attentive to the means of victory, indifferent whether they acquired it by artifice or plain dealing. This method of disputing, which the ancients called *œconomical* [*l*], and which had victory for its object,

☞ [*k*] This work is entitled, *Testimonia contra Judæos.*
[*l*] Souverain, *Platonism devoilé*, p. 244. Daille, *De vet.*

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ject, rather than truth, was, in consequence of the prevailing taste for rhetoric and sophistry, almost universally approved. The Platonics contributed to the support and encouragement of this ungenerous method of disputing, by that maxim of theirs which asserted the innocence of defending the truth by artifice and falsehood. This will appear manifest to those who have read, with any manner of penetration and judgment, the arguments of Origen against Celsus, and those of the other Christian disputants against the idolatrous Gentiles. The method of Tertullian, who used to plead prescription against erroneous doctors, was not, perhaps, unfair in this century; but they must be much unacquainted both with the times, and, indeed, with the nature of things, who imagine that it is always allowable to employ this method [*m*].

Suppositious, or spurious writings.

XI. This disingenious and vicious method of surprising their adversaries by artifice, and striking them down, as it were, by lies and fictions, produced, among other disagreeable effects, a great number of books, which were falsely attributed to certain great men, in order to give these spurious productions more credit and weight. For, as the greatest part of mankind are less governed by reason than by authority, and prefer, in many cases, the decisions of fallible mortals to

vet. usu Patrum, lib. i. p. 160. Jo. Christoph. Wolfii *Casauboniana*, p. 100. Concerning the famous rule, *to do a thing*, κατ' οἰκονομίαν or *œconomically:* see particularly the ample illustrations of Gataker, *ad Marci Antonini*, lib. xi. p. 330, &c.

☞ [*m*] We scarcely know any case in which the plea of *prescription* can be admitted as a satisfactory argument, in favour of religious tenets, or articles of faith, unless by *prescription* be meant, *a doctrine's being established in the time, and by the authority of the apostles.* In all other cases, *prescription* is no argument at all: it cannot recommend *error*, and *truth* has no need of its support.

to the unerring dictates of the divine word, the disputants, of whom we are now speaking, thought they could not serve the truth more effectually than by opposing illustrious names and respectable authorities to the attacks of its adversaries. Hence, the book of *canons*, which certain artful men ascribed falsely to the apostles; hence, the *apostolical constitutions*, of which Clement, bishop of *Rome*, is said to have formed a collection; hence the *recognitions* and the *clementina*, which are also attributed to Clement [*n*], and many other productions of that nature, which, for a long time, were too much esteemed by credulous men.

Nor were the managers of controversy the only persons who employed these stratagems; the Mystics had recourse to the same pious frauds to support their sect. And accordingly, when they were asked from what chief their establishment took its rise, to get clear of this perplexing question, they feigned a chief, and chose, for that purpose, Dionysius the Areopagite, a man of almost apostolical weight and authority, who was converted to Christianity, in the first century, by the preaching of St. Paul at *Athens*. And to render this fiction more specious, they attributed to this great man various treatises concerning the *monastic life*, *the mystic theology*, and other subjects of that nature, which were the productions of some senseless and insipid writers of after-times. Thus it happened, through the pernicious influence

☞ [*u*] It is not with the utmost accuracy that Dr. Mosheim places the *recognitions* among the spurious works of antiquity, since they are quoted by Origen, Epiphanius, and Ruffin, as the work of Clement. It is true, indeed, that these writers own them to have been altered in several places, and falsified by the heretics; and Epiphanius, particularly, tells us, that the Ebionites scarcely left any thing sound in them. As to the *Clementina*, they were undoubtedly spurious.

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ence of human passions, which too often mingle themselves with the execution of the best purposes and the most upright intentions, that they, who were desirous of surpassing all others in piety, looked upon it as lawful, and even laudable, to advance the cause of piety by artifice and fraud.

Controversy concerning the millennium.

XII. The most famous controversies that divided the Christians during this century, were those concerning the *millennium*, or *reign of a thousand years;* the *baptism of heretics*, and the *doctrine of* Origen.

Long before this period, an opinion had prevailed, that Christ was to come and reign a thousand years among men, before the entire and final dissolution of this world. This opinion, which had hitherto met with no opposition, was differently interpreted by different persons: nor did all promise themselves the same kind of enjoyments in that future and glorious kingdom [*o*]. But, in this century, its credit began to decline, principally through the influence and authority of Origen, who opposed it with the greatest warmth, because it was incompatible with some of his favourite sentiments [*p*]. Nepos, an Egyptian bishop, endeavoured to restore this opinion to its former credit, in a book written *against the allegorists*, for so he called, by way of contempt, the adversaries of the Millennarian system. This work, and the hypothesis it defended, was extremely well received by great numbers

☞ [*o*] See the learned *Treatise concerning the true millennium*, which Dr. Whitby has subjoined to the second volume of his *Commentary upon the New Testament*. See also, for an account of the doctrine of the ancient Millennarians, the fourth, fifth, seventh, and ninth volumes of Lardner's *Credibility*, &c.

[*p*] See Origen, *De principiis*, lib. ii. cap. xi. p. 104. tom. i. opp.

numbers in the canton of Arsinoe: and among others by Colacion, a presbyter of no mean influence and reputation. But Dionysius of *Alexandria*, a disciple of Origen, stopped the growing progress of this doctrine by his private discourse, and also by two learned and judicious dissertations concerning the *divine promises* [q].

Concerning the baptism of heretics.

XIII. The disputes concerning the *baptism of heretics* were not carried on with that amiable spirit of candor, moderation, and impartiality with which Dionysius opposed the Millennian doctrine. The warmth and violence that were exerted in this controversy, were far from being edifying to such as were acquainted with the true genius of Christianity, and with that meekness and forbearance that should particularly distinguish its doctors.

As there was no express law which determined the manner and form, according to which those who abandoned the heretical sects were to be received into the communion of the church, the rules practised in this matter were not the same in all Christian churches. Many of the Oriental and African Christians placed recanting heretics in the rank of catechumens, and admitted them by *baptism*, into the communion of the faithful; while the greatest part of the European churches, considering the baptism of heretics as valid, used no other forms in their reception than the *imposition of hands*, accompanied with solemn prayer. This diversity prevailed for a long time without kindling contentions or animosities. But, at length, charity waxed cold, and the fire of ecclesiastical discord broke out. In this century, the Asiatic Christians came to a determination in a point

[q] See Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. vii. cap. xxiv. p. 271. as also Gennadius, *De dogmatibus Ecclesiasticis*, cap. lv. p. 32 edit. Elmenhorst.

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point that was hitherto, in some measure, undecided; and in more than one council established it as a law, that all heretics were to be re-baptized before their admission to the communion of the true church [*r*]. When Stephen, bishop of *Rome*, was informed of this determination, he behaved with the most unchristian violence and arrogance towards the Asiatic Christians, broke communion with them, and excluded them from the communion of the church of *Rome*. These haughty proceedings made no impression upon Cyprian bishop of *Carthage*, who, notwithstanding the menaces of the Roman pontiff, assembled a council on this occasion, adopted, with the rest of the African bishops, the opinion of the Asiatics, and gave notice thereof to the imperious Stephen. The fury of the latter was redoubled at this notification, and produced many threatenings and invectives against Cyprian, who replied with great force and resolution, and, in a second council held at *Carthage*, declared the baptism administered by heretics, void of all efficacy and validity. Upon this the choler of Stephen swelled beyond measure, and, by a decree full of invectives, which was received with contempt, he excommunicated the African bishops, whose moderation on the one hand, and the death of their imperious antagonist on the other, put an end to the violent controversy, [*s*].

Disputes concerning Origen.

XIV. The controversy concerning Origen was set in motion by Demetrius, bishop of *Alexandria*,

[*r*] Euseb. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. vii. cap. v. vii. Firmilianus, *Epistol. ad Cyprianum*, printed among Cyprian's *Letters*, Let. lxxv.

[*s*] Cyprian, *Epist.* lxx. p. 124. lxxiii. p. 129. Augustin. *De Baptismo contra Donatistas*, lib. v. vii. tom. ix. opp. where are to be found the acts of the council of *Carthage*, A. D. 256. Prud. Marani *vita Cypriani*, p. 107.

Alexandria, animated, as some say, by a principle of envy and hatred against this learned man, with whom he had formerly lived in an intimate friendship. The assertion, however, of those who attribute the opposition of Demetrius to this odious principle, appears something more than doubtful: for, in the whole of his conduct towards Origen, there are no visible marks of envy, though many indeed of passion and arrogance, of violence and injustice. The occasion of all this was, as follows: In the year 228, Origen having set out for *Achaia*, was, in his journey thither, received with singular marks of affection and esteem by the bishops of *Cæsarea*, and *Jerusalem*, who ordained him *presbyter*, by imposition of hands. This proceeding gave high offence to Demetrius, who declared Origen unworthy of the priesthood, because he had castrated himself, and maintained, at the same time, that it was not lawful to advance, to a higher dignity, the principal of the *Alexandrian* school, which was under his episcopal inspection, without his knowledge and approbation. A conclusion, however, was put to these warm debates, and Origen returned to *Alexandria*. This calm was, indeed, but of short duration, being soon succeeded by a new breach between him and Demetrius, the occasion of which is not known, but which grew to such a height as obliged Origen, in the year 231, to abandon his charge at *Alexandria*, and retire to *Cæsarea*. His absence, however, did not appease the resentment of Demetrius, who continued to persecute him with the utmost violence. To satisfy fully his vengeance against Origen, he assembled two councils, in the first of which he condemned him unheard, and deprived him of his office; and in the second, had him degraded from his sacerdotal dignity. It is probable, that in one of these councils, especially the latter

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latter, Demetrius accused him of erroneous sentiments in matters of religion; for it was about this time that Origen published his *Book of Principles*, which contains several opinions of a dangerous tendency [*t*]. The greatest part of the Christian bishops approved of the proceedings of the Alexandrian council, against which the bishops of the churches of *Achaia*, *Palestine*, *Phœnicia*, and *Arabia*, declared at the same time the highest displeasure [*u*].

☞ [*t*] This work, which was a sort of introduction to theology, has only come down to us in the translation of Ruffinus, who corrected and maimed it, in order to render it more conformable to the orthodox doctrine of the church than Origen had left it. It contains, however, even in its present form, several bold and singular opinions, such as the pre-existence of souls, and their fall into mortal bodies, in consequence of their deviation from the laws of order in their first state, and the final restoration of all intelligent beings to order and happiness. Ruffinus, in his apology for Origen, alleges, that his writings were maliciously falsified by the heretics; and that, in consequence thereof, many errors were attributed to him which he did not adopt; as also, that the opinions, in which he differed from the doctrines of the church were only proposed by him as curious conjectures.

[*u*] The accounts here given of the persecution of Origen, are drawn from the most early and authentic sources, such as Euseb. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. vi. cap. xxiv. Photius, *Bibl. Cod.* cxviii. Jerom's *Catalogue of Ecclesiastical Writers*, and from Origen himself; and they differ in some respects from those, which common writers, such as Doucin, Huet, and others, give of this matter.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

Concerning the rites and ceremonies used in the church during this century.

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I. ALL the records of this century mention the multiplication of rites and ceremonies in the Christian church. Several of the causes that contributed to this, have been already pointed out; to which we may add, as a principal one, the passion which now reigned for the Platonic philosophy, or rather, for the popular Oriental superstition concerning *demons*, adopted by the Platonists, and borrowed unhappily, from them, by the Christian doctors. For there is not the least doubt, but that many of the rites, now introduced into the church, derived their origin from the reigning opinions concerning the nature of *demons*, and the *powers* and *operations* of *invisible beings*. Hence the use of *exorcisms* and *spells*, the frequency of *fasts*, and the aversion to *wedlock*. Hence the custom of avoiding all connexions with those who were not as yet baptized, or who lay under the penalty of excommunication, as persons supposed to be under the dominion of some malignant spirit. And hence the rigour and severity of that discipline and penance that were imposed upon those who had incurred by their immoralities, the censures of the church [*w*]. Rites multiplied.

II. In most of the provinces there were, at this time, certain fixed places set apart for public worship. Public worship.

[*w*] For an ample account of this matter, the reader may consult Porphyry's treatise concerning abstinence, and compare what that writer has said on the subject, with the customs received among the Christians. Several curious things are also to be found in Theodoret and Eusebius upon this head.

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worship among the Christians, as will appear evident to every impartial inquirer into these matters. Nor is it absolutely improbable, that these churches were, in several places, embellished with images and other ornaments.

With respect to the form of divine worship, and the times appointed for its celebration, there were little innovations made in this century. Two things, however, deserve to be taken notice of here: the first is, that the discourses, or sermons, addressed to the people, were very different from those of the earlier times of the church, and degenerated much from the ancient simplicity. For, not to say any thing of Origen, who introduced long sermons, and was the first who explained the scriptures in his discourses, several bishops, who had received their education in the schools of the rhetoricians, were exactly scrupulous, in adapting their public exhortations and discourses to the rules of Grecian eloquence. And this method gained such credit, as to be soon, almost universally followed. The second thing that we proposed to mention as worthy of notice, is, that about this time, the use of *incense* was introduced, at least into many churches. This has been denied by some men of eminent learning; the fact, however, is rendered evident by the most unexceptionable testimonies [*x*].

Administration of the Lord's supper.

III. Several alterations were now introduced in the celebration of the Lord's supper, by those who had the direction of divine worship. The prayers, used upon this occasion, were lengthened; and the solemnity and pomp, with which this important institution was celebrated, were considerably increased; no doubt, with a pious intention

[*x*] See Bishop Beveregc *ad Canon.* iii. *Apostol.* p. 461; as also another work of the same author, entitled, *Codex Canon. vindicatus*, p. 78.

intention to render it still more respectable, those who were in a *penitential state*, and those also who had not received the sacrament of baptism, were not admitted to this holy supper; and it is not difficult to perceive, that these exclusions were an imitation of what was practised in the heathen mysteries. We find, by the accounts of Prudentius [*y*] and others, that gold and silver vessels were now used in the administration of the Lord's supper; nor is there any reason why we should not adopt this opinion, since it is very natural to imagine, that those churches, which were composed of the most opulent members, would readily indulge themselves in this piece of religious pomp. As to the time of celebrating this solemn ordinance, it must be carefully observed, that there was a considerable variation in different churches, arising from their different circumstances, and founded upon reasons of prudence and necessity. In some, it was celebrated in the morning; in others, at noon; and in others, in the evening. It was also more frequently repeated in some churches, than in others; but was considered in all as of the highest importance, and as essential to salvation; for which reason it was even thought proper to administer it to infants. The sacred feasts, that accompanied this venerable institution, preceded its celebration in some churches, and followed it in others.

IV. There were, twice a year, stated times when baptism was administered to such as, after a long course of trial and preparation, offered themselves as candidates for the profession of Christianity. This ceremony was performed only in the presence of such as were already initiated into the Christian mysteries. The remission of

Baptism.

[*y*] Περὶ στεφαν. *Hymn* ii. p. 60. edit. *Heinsii.*

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sins was thought to be its immediate and happy fruit, while the bishop, by prayer and the imposition of hands, was supposed to confer those sanctifying gifts of the Holy Ghost, that are necessary to a life of righteousness and virtue [z]. We have already mentioned the principal rites that were used in the administration of baptism; and we have only to add, that none were admitted to this solemn ordinance, until, by the menacing and formidable shouts and declamation of the *exorcist*, they had been delivered from the dominion of the prince of darkness, and consecrated to the service of God. The origin of this superstitious ceremony may be easily traced, when we consider the prevailing opinions of the times. The Christians, in general, were persuaded, that rational souls deriving their existence from God, must consequently be in themselves pure, holy, and endowed with the noble principles of liberty and virtue. But upon this supposition, it was difficult to account for the corrupt propensities and actions of men, any other way, than by attributing them either to the malignant nature of *matter*, or the influence and impulse of some *evil spirit*, who was perpetually compelling them to sin. The former of these opinions was embraced by the Gnostics, but was rejected by true Christians, who denied the eternity of matter, considered it as a creature of God, and

[z] That such was the notion prevalent at this time, is evident from testimonies of sufficient weight. And as this point is of great consequence, in order to our understanding the theology of the ancients, which differs from ours in many respects, we shall mention one of these testimonies, even that of Cyprian, who, in his 73d letter, expresses himself thus: "It is "manifest where, and by whom the remission of sins, which "is conferred in Baptism, is administered.—They who are "presented to the rulers of the church, obtain, by our prayers "and imposition of hands, the Holy Ghost." See also Euseb. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. vii. cap. viii.

and therefore adopted the latter notion, that in all vicious persons there was a certain *evil being*, the author and source of their corrupt dispositions and their unrighteous deeds [*a*]. The driving out this *demon* was now considered as an essential preparation for baptism, after the administration of which, the candidates returned home, adorned with crowns, and arrayed in white garments, as sacred emblems; the former, of their victory over sin and the world; the latter, of their inward purity and innocence.

V. *Fasting* began now to be held in more esteem than it had formerly been; a high degree of sanctity was attributed to this practice, and it was even looked upon as of indispensible necessity, from a notion that the *demons* directed their stratagems principally against those who pampered themselves with delicious fare, and were less troublesome to the lean and the hungry, who lived under the severities of a rigorous abstinence [*b*]. The Latins, contrary to the general custom, fasted the seventh day of the week, and as the Greeks and Orientals refused to follow their example here, this afforded a new subject of contention between them. Fasting.

The Christians offered up their ordinary prayers at three stated times of the day, *viz.* at the *third*, the *sixth*, and the *ninth hour*, according to the Prayers.

 custom

[*a*] It is demonstrably evident, that *exorcism* was added to the other baptismal rites in the third century, after the introduction of the Platonic philosophy into the church. For, before this time, we hear no mention made of it. Justin Martyr, in his *second apology*, and Tertullian, in his book concerning the *military crown*, give us an account of the ceremonies used in baptism during the second century, without any mention of *exorcism*. This is a very strong argument of its being posterior to these two great men; and is every way proper to persuade us, that it made its entrance into the Christian church in the third century, and probably first in *Egypt*.

[*b*] Clementin. *Homil.* ix. sect. 9. p. 688. Porphyr. *De abstinentia*, lib. iv. p. 417.

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custom observed among the Jews. But, besides these stated devotions, true believers were assiduous in their addresses to the Supreme Being, and poured forth frequently their vows and supplications before his throne, because they considered prayer as the most essential duty, as well as the noblest employment, of a sanctified nature. At those festivals, which recalled the memory of some joyful event, and were to be celebrated with expressions of thanksgiving and praise, they prayed standing, as they thought that posture the fittest to express their joy and their confidence. On days of contrition and fasting, they presented themselves upon their knees before the throne of the Most High, to express their profound humiliation and self-abasement. Certain forms of prayer were, undoubtedly, used in many places both in public and in private; but many also expressed their pious feelings in the natural effusions of an unpremeditated eloquence.

The sign of the cross used by Christians.

The *sign of the cross* was supposed to administer a victorious power over all sorts of trials and calamities, and was more especially considered as the surest defence against the snares and stratagems of malignant spirits. And hence it was, that no Christian undertook any thing of moment, without arming himself with the influence of this triumphant sign.

CHAP. V.

Concerning the divisions and heresies that troubled the church during this century.

Remains of the ancient sects.

I. THE same sects that, in the former ages, had produced such disorder and perplexity in the Christian church, continued, in this, to create new troubles, and to foment new divisions. The Mon-

Montanists, Valentinians, Marcionites, and the other Gnostics, continued still to draw out their forces, notwithstanding the repeated defeats they had met with; and their *obstinacy* remained even when their *strength* was gone, as it often happens in religious controversy. Adelphus and Aquilinus who were of the Gnostic tribe, endeavoured to insinuate themselves and their doctrine into the esteem of the public, at *Rome*, and in other places in *Italy* [*c*]. They were, however, opposed not only by the Christians, but also by Plotinus, the greatest Platonic philosopher of this age, who, followed by a numerous train of disciples, opposed these two chimerical teachers, and others of the same kind, with as much vigour and success as the most enlightened Christians could have done. The philosophical opinions which this faction entertained concerning the Supreme Being, the origin of the world, the nature of evil, and several other subjects, were entirely opposite to the doctrines of Plato. Hence the disciples of Jesus, and the followers of Plotinus, joined together their efforts against the progress of Gnosticism: and there is no doubt but that their united force soon destroyed the credit and authority of this fantastic sect, and rendered it contemptible in the estimation of the wise [*d*].

Manes and the Manichæans.

II. While the Christians were struggling with these corrupters of the truth, and upon the point of obtaining a complete and decisive victory, a new enemy, more vehement and odious than the rest, started up suddenly, and engaged in the contest. This was Manes (or Manichæus, as he sometimes is called by his disciples), by birth a Persian; educated among the Magi, and himself

[*c*] Porphyr. *vita Plotini*, cap. xvi. p. 118.

[*d*] Plotinus' book against the Gnostics is extant in his works, *Ennead.* ii. lib. ix. p. 213.

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one of that number, before he embraced the profession of Christianity. Instructed in all those arts and sciences, which the Persians, and the other neighbouring nations, held in the highest esteem, he had penetrated into the depths of astronomy in the midst of a rural life; studied the art of healing, and applied himself to painting and philosophy. His genius was vigorous and sublime, but redundant and ungoverned; and his mind, destitute of a proper temperature, seemed to border on fanaticism and madness. He was so adventurous as to attempt a coalition of the doctrine of the Magi with the Christian system, or rather the explication of the one by the other; and, in order to succeed in this audacious enterprize, he affirmed that Christ had left the doctrine of salvation unfinished and imperfect; and that he was the *comforter*, whom the departing Saviour had promised to his disciples to lead them to all truth. Many were deceived by the eloquence of this enthusiast, by the gravity of his countenance, and the innocence and simplicity of his manners; so that, in a short time, he formed a sect not utterly inconsiderable in point of number. He was put to death by Varanes I. king of the Persians; though historians are not agreed concerning the cause, the time, and the manner, of his execution [*e*].

III. The

☞ [*e*] Some allege, that Manes, having undertaken to cure the son of the Persian monarch of a dangerous disease, by his medicinal art, or his miraculous power, failed in the attempt, precipitated the death of the prince, and this incurring the indignation of the king his father, was put to a cruel death. This account is scarcely probable, as it is mentioned by none of the Oriental writers cited by D'Herbelot, and as Bar Hebræus speaks of it in terms which shews that it was only an uncertain rumour. The death of Manes is generally attributed to another cause by the Oriental writers. They tell us, that Manes (after having been protected in a singular manner, by Hormizdas, who succeeded Sapor on the

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III. The doctrine of Manes was a motley mixture of the tenets of Christianity with the ancient philosophy of the Persians, which he had been instructed in during his youth. He combined these two systems; and applied and accommodated to Jesus Christ the characters and actions which the Persians attributed to the god Mithras. The principal doctrines of Manes are comprehended in the following summary:

His doctrine of two principles.

"There are two principles from which all "things proceed; the one is a most *pure and sub-* "*tle matter*, called *Light;* and the other a *gross* "*and corrupt substance*, called *Darkness*. Each "of these are subject to the dominion of a super- "intending Being, whose existence is from all "eternity. The Being, who presides over the "Light, is called God; he that rules the *land* "*of Darkness*, bears the title of *Hyle*, or *Demon*. "The Ruler of the Light is supremely happy; "and, in consequence thereof, benevolent and "good; the Prince of Darkness is unhappy in "himself; and, desiring to render others par- "takers of his misery, is evil and malignant. "These Two Beings have produced an immense "multitude of creatures, resembling themselves, "and distributed them through their respective "provinces.

Concerning man.

IV. "The Prince of Darkness knew not, "for a long series of ages, that Light existed in "the

the Persian throne, but who was not however able to defend him, at length, against the united hatred of the Christians, the Magi, the Jews, and the Pagans) was shut up in a strong castle, which Hormizdas had erected between *Bagdad* and *Suza*, to serve him as a refuge against those who persecuted him on account of his doctrine. They add, that, after the death of Hormizdas, Varanes I. his successor, first protected Manes, but afterwards gave him up to the fury of the Magi, whose resentment against him was due to his having adopted the Saducean principles, as some say, while others attributed it to his having mingled the tenets of the Magi with the doctrines of Christianity.

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" the universe; and no sooner perceived it, by " the means of a war that was kindled in his do- " minions, than he bent his endeavours towards " the subjecting it to his empire. The Ruler of " the Light opposed to his efforts an army " commanded by the *first man*, but not with the " highest success; for the generals of the Prince " of Darkness, seized upon a considerable por- " tion of the celestial elements, and of the Light " itself, and mingled them in the mass of corrupt " matter. The second general of the Ruler of " the Light, whose name was the *living spirit*, " made war with more success against the Prince " of Darkness, but could not entirely disengage " the pure particles of the celestial matter, from " the corrupt mass through which they had been " dispersed. The Prince of Darkness, after his " defeat, produced the first parents of the human " race. The beings engendered from this original " stock, consist of a body formed out of the " corrupt matter of the kingdom of Darkness, " and of two souls; one of which is *sensitive* and " *lustful*, and owes its existence to the *evil prin-* " *ciple;* the other *rational* and *immortal*, a parti- " cle of that divine Light, which was carried away " by the army of Darkness, and immersed into " the mass of malignant matter.

Concerning Christ and the Holy Ghost.

V. " Mankind being thus formed by the " Prince of Darkness, and those minds, that " were the productions of the eternal Light, be- " ing united to their mortal bodies, God created " the earth out of the corrupt mass of matter, by " that *living spirit*, who had vanquished the " Prince of Darkness. The design of this crea- " tion was to furnish a dwelling for the human " race, to deliver, by degrees, the captive souls " from their corporeal prisons, and to extract " the celestial elements from the gross sub- " stance in which they were involved. In order

" to

" to carry this design into execution, God pro-
" duced *two beings* of eminent dignity from his
" own substance, which were to lend their auspi-
" cious succours to imprisoned souls; one of these
" sublime entities was Christ; and the other,
" the Holy Ghost. Christ is that glorious in-
" telligence which the Persians called *Mithras;*
" he is a most splendid substance, consisting of
" the brightness of the eternal Light; subsisting
" in, and by himself; endowed with life; enriched
" with infinite wisdom; and his residence is
" in the sun. The Holy Ghost is also a lumi-
" nous and animated body, diffused throughout
" every part of the atmosphere which surrounds
" this terrestrial globe. This *genial principle*
" warms and illuminates the minds of men, ren-
" ders also the earth fruitful, and draws forth gra-
" dually from its bosom the latent particles of
" celestial fire, which it wafts up on high to their
" primitive station.

Concerning the office of Christ.

VI. " After that the Supreme Being had, for
" a long time admonished and exhorted the cap-
" tive souls, by the ministry of the angels, and of
" holy men, raised up, and appointed for that pur-
" pose, he ordered Christ to leave the solar re-
" gions, and to descend upon earth, in order to
" accelerate the return of those imprisoned spirits
" to their celestial country. In obedience to this
" divine command, Christ appeared among the
" Jews, clothed with the shadowy form of a hu-
" man body, and not with the real substance.
" During his ministry, he taught mortals how to
" disengage the rational soul from the corrupt
" body, to conquer the violence of malignant
" matter, and he demonstrated his divine mission
" by stupendous miracles. On the other hand,
" the Prince of Darkness used every method to
" inflame the Jews against this divine messen-
" ger, and incited them at length to put him to
" death

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"death upon an ignominious cross; which punishment, however, he suffered not in reality, "but only in appearance, and in the opinion of "men. When Christ had fulfilled the purposes "of his mission, he returned to his throne in the "sun, and appointed a certain number of chosen "apostles to propagate through the world the "religion he had taught during the course of his "ministry. But, before his departure, he promised, that, at a certain period of time, he "would send an apostle superior to all others in

Concerning the comforter.

"eminence and dignity, whom he called the *paraclete*, or *comforter*, who should add many "things to the precepts he had delivered, and "dispel all the errors under which his servants "laboured concerning divine things. This *com-*"*forter*, thus expressly promised by Christ, is "Manes, the Persian, who, by the order of the "Most High, declared to mortals the whole "doctrine of salvation, without exception, and "without concealing any of its truths, under the "veil of metaphor, or any other covering.

Concerning the purification of souls, and their future condition.

VII. "Those souls, who believe Jesus Christ "to be the Son of God, renounce the worship "of the God of the Jews, who is the Prince of "Darkness, obey the laws delivered by Christ "as they are enlarged and illustrated by the *com-*"*forter* Manes, and combat with persevering "fortitude, the lusts and appetites of a corrupt "nature, derive from this faith and obedience "the inestimable advantage of being gradually "purified from the contagion of matter. The "total purification of souls cannot, indeed, be "accomplished during this mortal life. Hence "it is, that the souls of men, after death, must "pass through two states more of probation and "trial, by *water* and *fire*, before they can ascend "to the regions of light. They mount, there-"fore, first into the moon, which consists of be-

"nign

"nign and salutary *water;* from whence, after a "lustration of fifteen days, they proceed to the "sun, whose purifying *fire* removes entirely all "their corruption, and effaces all their stains. "The bodies, composed of malignant matter, "which they have left behind them, return to "their first state, and enter into their original "mass."

Concerning the fate of unpurified souls.

VIII. "On the other hand, those souls who "have neglected the salutary work of their puri- "fication, pass, after death, into the bodies of "animals, or other natures, where they remain "until they have expiated their guilt, and accom- "plished their probation. Some, on account of "their peculiar obstinacy and perverseness, pass "through a severer course of trial, being de- "livered over, for a certain time, to the power "of malignant ærial spirits who torment them "in various ways. When the greatest part of "the captive souls are restored to liberty, and "to the regions of light, then a devouring fire "shall break forth, at the divine command, "from the caverns in which it is at present con- "fined, and shall destroy and consume the frame "of the world. After this tremendous event, "the prince and *powers of darkness* shall be "forced to return to their primitive seats of "anguish and misery, in which they shall dwell "for ever. For, to prevent their ever renewing "this war in the regions of *light*, God shall sur- "round the mansions of Darkness with an in- "vincible guard, composed of those souls who "have fallen irrecoverably from the hopes of sal- "vation, and who, set in array, like a military "band, shall surround those gloomy seats of woe. "and hinder any of their wretched inhabitants "from coming forth again to the *light*."

IX. In order to remove the strongest obstacles that lay against the belief of this monstrous system.

Manes

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Manes rejected almost all the sacred books in which Christians look for the sublime truths of their holy religion. He affirmed, in the first place, that the Old Testament was not the word of God, but of the Prince of Darkness who was substituted by the Jews in the place of the true God. He maintained further, that the *Four Gospels*, which contain the history of Christ, were not written by the apostles, or, at least, that they were corrupted and interpolated by designing and artful men, and were augmented with Jewish fables and fictions. He therefore supplied their place by a *gospel*, which, he said, was dictated to him by God himself, and which he distinguished by the title of *Erteng*. He rejected also the *Acts of the Apostles*; and though he acknowledged the *epistles* that are attributed to St. Paul, to be the productions of that divine apostle, yet he looked upon them as considerably corrupted and falsified in a variety of passages. We have not any certain account of the judgment he formed concerning the other books of the New Testament.

The opinion of Manes concerning the Old and New Testament.

X. The rule of life and manners that Manes prescribed to his disciples was most extravagantly rigorous and austere. He commanded them to mortify and macerate the body, which he looked upon as *intrinsically* evil, and *essentially* corrupt; to deprive it of all those objects which could contribute either to its conveniency or delight; to extirpate all those desires that lead to the pursuit of external objects; and to divest themselves of all the passions and instincts of nature. Such was the unnatural rule of practice which this enormous fanatic prescribed to his followers; but foreseeing, at the same time, that his sect could not possibly become numerous, if this severe manner of living was to be imposed without distinction upon all his adherents, he divided his disciples into *two* classes; the *one* of which comprehended the

His rule of life severely sober.

Division of his disciples.

the perfect Christians, under the name of the *elect;* and the other, the imperfect and feeble, under the title of *hearers.* The *elect* were obliged to a rigorous and entire abstinence from flesh, eggs, milk, fish, wine, all intoxicating drink, wedlock, and all amorous gratifications; and to live in a state of the sharpest penury, nourishing their shrivelled and emaciated bodies with bread, herbs, pulse, and melons, and depriving themselves of all the comforts that arise from the moderate indulgence of natural passions, and also from a variety of innocent and agreeable pursuits. The discipline, appointed for the *hearers,* was of a milder nature. They were allowed to possess houses, lands, and wealth, to feed upon flesh, to enter into the bonds of conjugal tenderness; but this liberty was granted them with many limitations, and under the strictest conditions of moderation and temperance.

The general assembly of the Manicheans was headed by a president, who represented Jesus Christ. There were joined to him *twelve rulers,* or *masters,* who were designed to represent the *twelve apostles;* and these were followed by *seventy-two bishops,* the images of the *seventy-two disciples* of our Lord. These bishops had *presbyters* and *deacons* under them, and all the members of these religious orders were chosen out of the class of the *elect* [*f*].

XI. The sect of the Hieracites was formed in *Egypt,* towards the conclusion of this century, by Hierax of *Leonitium,* a bookseller by profession, and distinguished eminently by his extensive learning, and a venerable air of sanctity and virtue. Some have considered this as a branch of the Manichean sect, but without foundation; since, notwith-

The sect of the Hieracites.

[*f*] See all this amply proved in the work intitled, *Commentarii de rebus Christianorum ante Constantinum Magnum.*

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withstanding the agreement of Manes and Hierax in some points of doctrine, it is certain that they differed in many respects. Hierax maintained, that the principal object of Christ's office and ministry was the promulgation of a *new law*, more severe and perfect than that of Moses; and from hence he concluded, that the use of flesh, wine, wedlock, and of other things agreeable to the outward senses, which had been permitted under the Mosaic dispensation, was absolutely prohibited and abrogated by Christ. If, indeed, we look attentively into his doctrine, we shall find, that, like Manes, he did not think that these austere acts of self-denial, were imposed by Christ indiscriminately upon all, but on such only as were ambitious of aspiring to the highest summit of virtue. To this capital error he added many others, which were partly the consequences of this illusion, and were, in part, derived from other sources. He excluded, for example, from the kingdom of heaven, children who died before they had arrived to the use of reason, and that upon the supposition that God was bound to administer the rewards of futurity, to those only who had fairly finished their victorious conflict with the body and its lusts. He maintained also, that Melchizedek, king of *Salem*, who blessed Abraham, was the Holy Ghost; denied the resurrection of the body, and cast a cloud of obscurity over the sacred scriptures by his allegorical fictions [*g*].

The Noetian controversy.

XII. The controversies relating to the divine Trinity, which took their rise in the former century, from the introduction of the Grecian philosophy into the Christian church, were now spreading with considerable vigour, and producing various methods of explaining that inexplicable doctrine.

[*g*] Epiphan. *Hæres.* lxvii. *Hieracitarum*, p. 710, &c.

doctrine. One of the first who engaged in this idle and perilous attempt of explaining what every mortal must acknowledge to be incomprehensible, was Noetus of *Smyrna*, an obscure man, and of mean abilities. He affirmed, that the supreme God, whom he called the *Father*, and considered as absolutely indivisible, united himself to the man Christ, whom he called the *Son*, and was born, and crucified with him. From this opinion, Noetus and his followers were distinguished by the title of Patripassians, *i. e.* persons who believe that the Supreme Father of the universe, and not any other divine person, had expiated the guilt of the human race. And, indeed, this appellation belongs to them justly, if the accounts which ancient writers give us of their opinions be accurate and impartial [*h*].

Sabellius.

XIII. About the middle of this century arose Sabellius, an African bishop or presbyter, who in *Pentapolis*, a province of *Cyrenaica*, and in *Ptolemais*, or *Barce*, its principal city, explained, in a manner very little different from that of Noetus, the doctrine of scripture concerning the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This dogmatist had a considerable number of followers, who adhered to him, notwithstanding that his opinions were refuted by Dionysius, bishop of *Alexandria*. His sentiments were, in some respects, different from those of Noetus; the latter was of opinion, that the *person* of the Father had assumed the human nature of Christ; whereas Sabellius maintained, that a certain *energy* only, proceeding from the Supreme Parent, or a certain portion of the divine

[*h*] See the *Discourse of* Hippolytus *against the Heresy of* Noetus, in the second volume of his works, published by Fabricius. As also Epiphan. *Hæres.* lvii. tom. i. p. 479. Theodoret. *Hæret. Fabul.* lib. iii. cap. iii. p. 227. tom. 4. opp.

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nature, was united to the Son of God, the man Jesus; and he considered, in the same manner, the *Holy Ghost*, as a portion of the everlasting Father [*i*]. From hence it appears, that the Sabellians, though they might with justice be called Patripassians, were yet called so by the ancients, in a different sense from that in which this name was given to the Noetians.

Beryllus.

XIV. At this same period, Beryllus an Arabian, bishop of *Bozrah*, and a man of eminent piety and learning, taught that Christ, before his birth, had no proper subsistence, nor any other divinity, than that of the Father; which opinion, when considered with attention, amounts to this: that Christ did not exist before Mary, but that a *spirit* issuing from God himself, and therefore superior to all human souls, as being a portion of the divine nature, was united to him, at the time of his birth. Beryllus, however, was refuted by Origen, with such a victorious power of argument and zeal, that he yielded up the cause, and returned into the bosom of the church [*k*].

Paul of Samosata.

XV. Paul of *Samosata*, bishop of *Antioch*, and also a magistrate, or civil judge, was very different from the pious and candid Beryllus, both in point of morals and doctrine. He was a vain and arrogant

[*i*] Almost all the historians, who give accounts of the ancient heresies, have made particular mention of Sabellius. Among others, see Euseb. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. vi. cap. vi. p. 252. Athanas. *Libro. de sententia Dionysii.* All the passages of the ancient authors, relating to Sabellius, are carefully collected by the learned Christopher Wormius, in his *Historia Sabelliana*, printed in 8vo, at *Francfort* and *Leipsick*, 1696.

[*k*] Euseb. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. vi. cap. xx. p. 222. cap. xxxiii. p. 231. Hieronym. *Catalog. Scriptor. Eccles.* cap. lx. p. 137. Socrates, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. iii. cap. vii. p. 174; and among the moderns, Le Clerc, *Ars Criticæ*, vol. i. part II. sect. 1. cap. xiv. p. 293. Chauffepied, *Nouveau Diction. Hist. Crit.* tom. i. p. 268.

arrogant man, whom riches had rendered insolent and self-sufficient [*l*]. He introduced much confusion and trouble into the eastern churches, by his new explication of the doctrine of the gospel concerning the nature of God and Christ, and left behind him a sect, that assumed the title of Paulians, or Paulianists. As far as we can judge of his doctrine, by the accounts of it that have been transmitted to us, it seems to have amounted to this: "That the *Son* and the *Holy* "*Ghost* exist in *God*, in the same manner as the "faculties of *reason* and *activity* do in man; that "Christ was born a mere man; but that the "*reason* or *wisdom* of the Father descended into "him, and by him wrought miracles upon earth, "and instructed the nations; and finally, that, "on account of this union of the *divine word* with "the *man* Jesus, Christ might, though improperly, "be called *God*."

Such were the real sentiments of Paul. He involved them, however, in such deep obscurity, by the ambiguous forms of speech he made use of to explain and defend them, that, after several meetings of the councils held to examine his errors, they could not convict him of heresy. At length, indeed, a council was assembled in the year 269, in which Malchion, the rhetorician, drew him forth from his obscurity, detected his evasions, and exposed him in his true colours; in consequence of which he was degraded from the episcopal order [*m*].

Absurdities of some Arabian philosophers.

XVI. It was not only in the point now mentioned, that the doctrine of the gospel suffered, at this time, from the erroneous fancies of wrong-headed doctors. For there sprung up now, in

[*l*] Euseb. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. vii. cap. xxx. p. 279.

[*m*] *Epistol. Concil. Antioch. ad Paulum in Bibliotheca, Patrum.* tom. xi. p. 302. *Dionysii Alex. Ep. ad Paulum,* ib. p. 273. *Decem Pauli Samosateni Quæstiones,* ib. p. 278.

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Arabia, a certain sort of minute philosophers, the disciples of a master, whose obscurity has concealed him from the knowledge of after-ages, who denied the immortality of the soul, believed that it perished with the body; but maintained, at the same time, that it was to be again recalled to life with the body, by the power of God. The philosophers, who held this opinion, were called Arabians, from their country. Origen was called from *Egypt*, to make head against this rising sect, and disputed against them, in a full council, with such remarkable success, that they abandoned their erroneous sentiments, and returned to the received doctrine of the church.

The troubles excited in the church by the Novatians.

XVII. Among the sects that arose in this century, we place that of the Novatians the last. This sect cannot be charged with having corrupted the doctrine of Christianity by their opinions; their crime was, that by the unreasonable severity of their discipline, they gave occasion to the most deplorable divisions, and made an unhappy rent in the church. Novatian, a presbyter of the church of *Rome*, a man also of uncommon learning and eloquence, but of an austere and rigid character, entertained the most unfavourable sentiments of those who had been separated from the communion of the church. He indulged his inclinations to severity so far, as to deny that such as had fallen into the commission of grievous transgressions, especially those who had apostatized from the faith, under the persecution set on foot by Decius, were to be again received into the bosom of the church. The greatest part of the presbyters, were of a different opinion in this matter, especially Cornelius, whose credit and influence were raised to the highest pitch by the esteem and admiration which his eminent virtues so naturally excited. Hence it happened, that when a bishop was to be chosen, in the year 250,

to

to succeed Fabianus in the see of *Rome*, Novatian opposed the election of Cornelius, with the greatest activity and bitterness. His opposition, however, was in vain, for Cornelius was chosen to that eminent office of which his distinguished merit rendered him so highly worthy. Novatian, upon this, separated himself from the jurisdiction of Cornelius, who, in his turn, called a council at *Rome*, in the year 251, and cut off Novatian and his partisans from the communion of the church. This turbulent man, being thus excommunicated, erected a new society, of which he was the first bishop; and which, on account of the severity of its discipline, was followed by many, and flourished, until the fifth century, in the greatest part of those provinces which had received the gospel. The chief person who assisted Novatian in this enterprize, was Novatus, a Carthaginian presbyter, a man of no principles, who, during the heat of this controversy, had come from *Carthage* to *Rome*, to escape the resentment and excommunication of Cyprian, his bishop, with whom he was highly at variance.

The severity of the Novatians against the lapsed.

XVIII. There was no difference, in point of doctrine, between the Novatians and other Christians. What peculiarly distinguished them was, their refusing to re-admit to the communion of the church, those who, after baptism, had fallen into the commission of heinous crimes, though they did not pretend, that even such were excluded from all possibility or hopes of salvation. They considered the Christian church as a society where virtue and innocence reigned universally, and none of whose members, from their entrance into it, had defiled themselves with any enormous crime; and, of consequence, they looked upon every society, which re-admitted heinous offenders to its communion, as unworthy of the title of a

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true Christian church. It was from hence, also, that they assumed the title of *Cathari*, i. e. the *pure*; and what shewed still a more extravagant degree of vanity and arrogance, they obliged such as came over to them from the general body of Christians, to submit to be baptized a second time, as a necessary preparation for entering into their society. For such deep root had their favourite opinion concerning the irrevocable rejection of heinous offenders taken in their minds, and so great was its influence upon the sentiments they entertained of other Christian societies, that they considered the baptism administered in those churches, which received the lapsed to their communion, even after the most sincere and undoubted repentance, as absolutely divested of the power of imparting the remission of sins [*n*].

[*n*] Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. vi. cap. xliii. p. 242. Cyprianus *variis Epistolis*, xlix. lii, &c. Albaspinæus, *Observat. Eccles.* lib. ii. cap. xx. xxi. Jos. Aug. Orsi. *De criminum capital. inter veteres Christianos absolutione*, p. 254. Kenekel, *De hæresi Novatiana.*

AN

ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY.

Book the Second.

CONTAINING THE

STATE OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH,

FROM THE TIME OF

CONSTANTINE THE GREAT,

TO

CHARLEMAGNE.

THE

FOURTH CENTURY.

PART I.

The EXTERNAL HISTORY of the CHURCH.

CHAPTER I.

Concerning the prosperous and calamitous events which happened to the church during this century.

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I. THAT I may not separate facts, which are intimately connected with each other, I have judged it expedient to combine, in the same chapter, the prosperous and calamitous events that happened to the church during this century, instead of treating them separately, as I have hitherto done. This combination, which presents things in their natural relations, as causes or effects, is, undoubtedly the principal circumstance that renders history truly interesting. In following, however, this plan, the order of time shall also be observed with as much accuracy as this interesting combination of events will admit of.

The church enjoys peace at the entrance of this century.

In the beginning of this century, the Roman empire was under the dominion of four chiefs, of whom two, Diocletian and Maximian Herculeus, were of superior dignity, and were distinguished each by the title of Augustus; while the

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the other two, *viz.* Constantius Chlorus and Maximinus Galerius, were in a certain degree of subordination to the former, and were honoured with the appellation of Cæsars. Under these four emperors, the church enjoyed an agreeable calm [*a*]. Diocletian, though much addicted to superstition, did not, however, entertain any aversion to the Christians: and Constantius Chlorus, who, following the dictates of right reason alone in the worship of the deity, had abandoned the absurdities of polytheism, treated them with condescension and benevolence. This alarmed the Pagan priests, whose interests were so closely connected with the continuance of the ancient superstitions, and who apprehended, not without reason, that to their great detriment the Christian religion would become daily more universal and triumphant throughout the empire. Under these anxious fears of the downfal of their authority, they addressed themselves to Diocletian, whom they knew to be of a timorous and credulous disposition, and, by fictitious oracles, and other such perfidious stratagems, endeavoured to engage him to persecute the Christians [*b*].

The persecution under Diocletian.

II. Diocletian, however, stood for some time unmoved by the treacherous arts of a selfish and superstitious priesthood, who, when they perceived the ill success of their cruel efforts, addressed themselves to Maximinus Galerius, one of the Cæsars, and also son-in-law to Diocletian, in order to accomplish their unrighteous purposes. This prince, whose gross ignorance of every thing but military affairs was accompanied with a fierce and savage temper, was

[*a*] Eusebius *Hist. Eccles.* lib. viii. cap. i. 291, &c.

[*b*] Eusebius, *De vita Constantini,* lib. ii. cap. l. p. 467. Lactantii *Institut. divin.* lib. iv. cap. xxvii. p. 393. Idem, *De mortibus persequutor,* cap. x. p. 943. edit. Heumann.

was a proper instrument for executing their designs. Set on, therefore, by the malicious insinuations of the heathen priests, the suggestions of a superstitious mother, and the ferocity of his own natural disposition, he solicited Diocletian with such indefatigable importunity, and in such an urgent manner, for an edict against the Christians, that he, at length, obtained his horrid purpose. For in the year 303, when this emperor was at *Nicomedia*, an order was obtained from him to pull down the churches of the Christians, to burn all their books and writings, and to take from them all their civil rights and privileges, and render them incapable of any honours or civil promotion [*c*]. This first edict, though rigorous and severe, extended not to the lives of the Christians, for Diocletian was extremely averse to slaughter and bloodshed; it was, however, destructive to many of them, particularly to those who refused to deliver the sacred books into the hands of the magistrates [*d*]. Many Christians, therefore, and among them several bishops and presbyters, seeing the consequences of this refusal, delivered up all the religious books, and other sacred things that were in their possession, in order to save their lives. This conduct was highly condemned by the most steady and resolute Christians, who looked upon this compliance as sacrilegious, and branded those who were guilty of it with the ignominious appellation of *traditors* [*e*].

III

[*c*] Lactantius, *De mortibus persequutor*, c. xi. p. 944. Eusebius, *Histor. Eccles.* lib. viii. cap. ii. p. 293, &c.

[*d*] Augustinus, *Breviculo collat. cum Donatistis*, cap. xv. xvii. p. 387. 390. tom. ix. opp. Baluzii *Miscellan.* tom. ii. p. 77. 92.

[*e*] Optatus Milevit. *De Schismate Donatistar.* lib. i sect. xiii. p. 13, &c. edit. Pinian.

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The causes and severity of this persecution.

III. Not long after the publication of this first edict against the Christians, a fire broke out, at two different times, in the palace of Nicomedia, where Galerius lodged with Diocletian. The Christians were accused, by their enemies, as the authors of this [*f*]; and the credulous Diocletian, too easily persuaded of the truth of this charge, caused vast numbers of them to suffer at *Nicomedia*, the punishment of incendiaries, and to be tormented in the most inhuman and infamous manner [*g*]. About the same time, there arose certain tumults and seditions in *Armenia* and in *Syria*, which were also attributed to the Christians by their irreconcileable enemies, and dexterously made use of to arm against them the emperor's fury. And, accordingly, Diocletian, by a new edict, ordered all the bishops and ministers of the Christian church to be cast into prison. Nor did his inhuman violence end here; for a third edict was soon issued out, by which it was ordered, that all sorts of torments should be employed, and the most insupportable punishments invented, to force these venerable captives to renounce their profession, by sacrificing to the heathen gods [*h*]; for it was hoped, that, if the bishops and doctors of the church could be brought to yield, their respective flocks would be easily

☞ [*f*] Lanctantius assures us, that Galerius caused fire to be privately set to the palace, that he might lay the blame of it upon the Christians, and by that means incense Diocletian still more against them; in which horrid stratagem he succeeded, for never was any persecution so bloody and inhuman, as that which this credulous emperor now set on foot against them.

[*g*] Euseb. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. viii. cap. vi. p. 297. Lactant. *De mortibus persequut.* cap. xix. p. 948. Constantinus M. *Oratio ad sanctor. cœtum.* cap. xxv. p. 601.

[*h*] Euseb. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. viii. cap. vii. p. 298. Idem, *De martyribus Palestinæ.*

easily induced to follow their example. An immense number of persons, illustriously distinguished by their piety and learning, became the victims of this cruel stratagem throughout the whole Roman empire, *Gaul* excepted, which was under the mild and equitable dominion of Constantius Chlorus [*i*]. Some were punished in such a shameful manner, as the rules of decency oblige us to pass in silence; some were put to death after having had their constancy tried by tedious and inexpressible tortures; and some were sent to the mines to draw out the remains of a miserable life in poverty and bondage.

The affairs of the Christians reduced to a dangerous crisis.

IV. In the second year of this horrible persecution, the 304th of the Christian æra, a fourth edict was published by Diocletian, at the instigation of Galerius, and the other inveterate enemies of the Christian name. By it the magistrates were ordered and commissioned to force all Christians, without distinction of rank or sex, to sacrifice to the gods, and were authorized to employ all sorts of torments, in order to drive them to this act of apostasy [*k*]. The diligence and zeal of the Roman magistrates, in the execution of this inhuman edict, had liked to have proved fatal to the Christian cause [*l*].

Galerius now made no longer a mystery of the ambitious project he had been revolving in his mind. Finding his scheme ripe for execution, he obliged Diocletian and Maximian Herculeus to resign the imperial dignity, and declared himself emperor of the east; leaving in the west Constantius Chlorus, with the ill state of whose health

[*i*] Lactantius, *De mortibus persequut.* cap. xv. p. 951. Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. viii. cap. xiii. p. 309. cap. xviii. p. 317.

[*k*] Eusebius, *De martyribus Palæstinæ.* cap. iii. p. 321, &c.

[*l*] Lactantius, *Institut. divin.* lib. v. cap. xi. p. 449.

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health he was well acquainted. He chose colleagues according to his own fancy, and rejecting the proposal of Diocletian, who recommended Maxentius, and Constantine the son of Constantius to that dignity, his choice fell upon *Severus*, and *Daza*, his sister's son, to whom he had a little before given the name of *Maximin* [*m*]. This revolution restored peace to those Christians who lived in the western provinces, under the administration of *Constantius* [*n*]; while those of the east, under the tyranny of *Galerius* had their sufferings and calamities dreadfully augmented [*o*].

The tranquillity of the church restored, the accession of Constantine to the empire;

V. The divine providence, however, was preparing more serene and happy days for the church. In order to this, it confounded the schemes of *Galerius*, and brought his counsels to nothing. In the year 306, *Constantius Chlorus* dying in *Britain*, the army saluted with the title of *Augustus*, his son *Constantine*, surnamed afterwards the *Great*, on account of his illustrious exploits, and forced him to accept the purple. This proceeding, which must have stung the tyrant Galerius to the heart, he was, nevertheless obliged to bear with patience, and even to confirm with the outward marks of his approbation. Soon after, a civil war broke out, the occasion of which was as follows; *Maximin Galerius*, inwardly enraged at the election of *Constantine* by the soldiers, sent him, indeed, the purple, but gave him only the title of *Cæsar*, and created *Severus* emperor. *Maxentius*, the son of *Maximian Herculeus*, and son-in-law to *Galerius*, provoked at the preference given to Severus,

[*m*] Lactant. *De mortibus persequut.* cap. xvii. p. 954. cap. xx. p. 961.

[*n*] Euseb. *De martyribus Palestinæ*, cap. xiii. p. 345.

[*o*] Lactant. *De mortibus persequut.* cap. xxi. p. 964.

Severus, assumed the imperial dignity, and found the less difficulty in making good this usurpation, that the Roman people hoped, by his means, to deliver themselves from the unsupportable tyranny of Galerius. Having caused himself to be proclaimed emperor, he chose his father Maximian for his colleague, who, receiving the purple from the hands of his son, was universally acknowledged in that character by the senate and the people. Amidst all these troubles and commotions, Constantine, beyond all human expectation, made his way to the imperial throne.

The western Christians, those of *Italy* and *Africa* excepted [*p*], enjoyed a tolerable degree of tranquillity and liberty during these civil tumults. Those of the east seldom continued for any considerable time in the same situation; subject to various changes and revolutions; their condition was sometimes adverse and sometimes tolerably easy, according to the different scenes that were presented by the fluctuating state of public affairs. At length, however, Maximin Galerius, who had been the author of their heaviest calamities, being brought to the brink of the grave by a most dreadful and lingering disease [*q*], whose complicated horrors no language can express, published in the year 311, a solemn edict, ordering the persecution to cease, and restoring freedom and repose to the Christians, against whom he had exercised such unheard-of cruelties [*r*].

VI.

☞ [*p*] The reason of this exception is, that the provinces of *Italy* and *Africa*, though nominally under the government of Severus, were yet in fact ruled by Galerius with an iron sceptre.

☞ [*q*] See a lively description of the disease of Galerius in the *Universal History*, vol. xv. p. 359. of the *Dublin* edition.

[*r*] Euseb. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. viii. cap. xvi. p. 314. Lactantius, *De mortibus persequut.* cap. xxxiii. p. 182.

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and by the defeat of Maxentius.

VI. After the death of Galerius, his dominions fell into the hands of Maximin and Licinius, who divided between them the provinces he had possessed. At the same time, Maxentius, who had usurped the government of *Africa*, and *Italy*, determined to make war upon Constantine, who was now master of *Spain* and the Gauls, and with this the ambitious view of reducing, under his dominion, the whole western empire. Constantine, apprised of this design, marched with a part of his army into *Italy*, gave battle to Maxentius at a small distance from *Rome*, and defeated totally that abominable tyrant, who, in his precipitate flight, fell into the *Tiber*, and was drowned. After this victory, which happened in the year 312, Constantine, and his colleague Licinius, immediately granted to the Christians a full power of living according to their own laws and institutions; which power was specified still more clearly in another edict, drawn up at *Milan*, in the following year [*s*]. Maximin, indeed, who ruled in the east, was preparing new calamities for the Christians, and threatening also with destruction the western emperors. But his projects were disconcerted by the victory which Licinius gained over his army, and, through distraction and despair, he ended his life by poison, in the year 313.

Different opinions concerning the faith of Constantine.

VII. About the same time, Constantine the Great, who had hitherto discovered no religious principles of any kind, embraced Christianity, in consequence, as it is said, of a *miraculous cross*, which appeared to him in the air, as he was marching towards *Rome* to attack Maxentius. But that this extraordinary event was the reason of his conversion, is a matter that has never yet been

[*s*] Euseb. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. x. cap. v. p. 388. Lactantius, *De mortibus persequut.* cap. xlviii. p. 1007.

been placed in such a light, as to dispel all doubts and difficulties. For the first edict of Constantine in favour of the Christians, and many other circumstances that might be here alleged, shew, indeed, that he was well-disposed to them and to their worship, but are no proof that he looked upon Christianity as the only true religion; which, however, would have been the natural effect of a miraculous conversion. It appears evident, on the contrary, that this emperor considered the other religions, and particularly that which was handed down from the ancient Romans, as also true and useful to mankind; and declared it as his intention and desire, that they should all be exercised and professed in the empire, leaving to each individual the liberty of adhering to that which he thought the best. *Constantine*, it is true, did not remain always in this state of indifference. In process of time, he acquired more extensive views of the excellence and importance of the Christian religion, and gradually arrived at an entire persuasion of its bearing alone the sacred marks of celestial truth, and of a divine origin. He was convinced of the falsehood and impiety of all other religious institutions; and, acting in consequence of this conviction, he exhorted earnestly all his subjects to embrace the gospel; and at length employed all the force of his authority in the abolition of the ancient superstition. It is not, indeed, easy, nor perhaps possible, to fix precisely the time when the religious sentiments of Constantine were so far changed as to render all religions but that of Christ, the objects of his aversion. All that we know, with certainty, concerning this matter is, that this change was first published to the world by the laws and edicts [*t*] which this

[*t*] Euseb. *De vita Constant.* lib. ii. cap. xx. p. 453. cap. xliv. p. 464.

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emperor issued out in the year 324, when, after the defeat and death of Licinius, he reigned, without a colleague, sole lord of the Roman empire. His design, however, with respect to the abolition of the ancient religion of the Romans, and the tolerating no other form of worship but the Christian, were only made known towards the latter part of his life, by the edicts he issued out for destroying the heathen temples, and prohibiting sacrifices [*u*].

Of Constantine's sincerity in the profession of Christianity.

VIII. The sincerity of Constantine's zeal for Christianity can scarcely be doubted, unless it be maintained, that the outward actions of men are in no degree, a proof of their inward sentiments. It must, indeed, be confessed, that the life and actions of this prince were not such as the Christian religion demands from those who profess to believe its sublime doctrines. It is also certain that, from his conversion to the last period of his life, he continued in the state of a *catechumen*, and was not received by baptism into the number of the faithful, until a few days before his death, when that sacred rite was administered to him at *Nicomedia*, by Eusebius, bishop of that place [*w*]. But neither of these circumstances are sufficient to prove that he was not entirely persuaded of the divinity of the Christian religion, or that his profession of the gospel was an act of pure dissimulation.

[*u*] See Godofred *ad Codic. Theodosian.* tom. vi. par. I. p. 290.

[*w*] Eusebius *De vita Constantini*, lib. iv. cap. lxi, lxii. Those who, upon the authority of certain records (whose date is modern, and whose credit is extremely dubious) affirm, that Constantine was baptized in the year 324, at *Rome*, by Sylvester, the bishop of that city, are evidently mistaken. Those, even of the Romish church, who are the most eminent for their learning and sagacity, reject this notion. See Noris, *Hist. Donatist.* tom iv. opp. p. 650. Thom. Mariæ Mamachii *Origin. et Antiquit. Christian.* tom. ii. p. 232.

mulation. For it was a custom with many, in this century, to put off their baptism to the last hour, that thus immediately after receiving by this rite the remission of their sins, they might ascend pure and spotless to the mansions of life and immortality. Nor are the crimes of Constantine any proof of the insincerity of his profession, since nothing is more evident, though it be strange and unaccountable, than that many who believe, in the firmest manner, the truth and divinity of the gospel, yet violate its laws by repeated transgressions, and live in contradiction to their own inward principles. Another question of a different nature might be proposed here, *viz.* Whether motives of a worldly kind did not contribute, in a certain measure, to give Christianity, in the esteem of Constantine, a preference to all other religious systems? It is indeed probable that this prince perceived the admirable tendency of the Christian doctrine and precepts to promote the stability of government, by preserving the citizens in their obedience to the reigning powers, and in the practice of those virtues that render a state happy. And he must naturally have observed, how defective the Roman superstition was in this important point [*x*].

[*x*] See Eusebius, *De vita Constant.* lib. i. cap. xxvii. p. 421. ☞ It has been sometimes remarked by the more eminent writers of the Roman History, that the superstition of that people, contrary to what Dr. Mosheim here observes, had a great influence in keeping them in their subordination and allegiance. It is more particularly observed, that in no other nation the solemn obligation of an oath was treated with such respect, and fulfilled with such a religious circumspection, and such an inviolable fidelity. But, notwithstanding all this, it is certain, that superstition, if it may be dexterously turned to good purposes, may be equally employed to bad. The artifice of an augur could have rendered superstition as useful to the infernal designs of a Tarquin and a Catiline, as to the noble and virtuous purposes

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A cross seen by him in the air.

IX. The doubts and difficulties that naturally arise in the mind concerning the *miraculous cross* that Constantine solemnly declared he had seen, about noon, in the air, are many and considerable. It is easy, indeed, to refute the opinion of those who look upon this prodigy as a cunning fiction, invented by the emperor to animate his troops in the ensuing battle, or who consider the narration as wholly fabulous [*y*]. The sentiment also of those, who imagine that this pretended cross was no more than a natural phenomenon in a solar halo, is perhaps, more ingenious, than solid and convincing [*z*]. Nor, in the third place, do we think it sufficiently proved, that the divine power interposed here to confirm the wavering faith of *Constantine* by a stupendous miracle. The only hypothesis, then [*a*], which

purposes of a Publicola, or a Trajan. But true Christianity can animate or encourage to nothing that is not just and good. It tends to support government by the principles of piety and justice, and not by the ambiguous flight of birds, and such like delusions.

[*y*] Hornbeck. *Comment. ad Bullam Urbani*, viii. *de Imagin. cultu*, p. 182. Oiselius, *Thesaur. Numism. Antiq.* p. 463. Tollius' *Preface to the French Translation of* Longinus, as also his *Adnot. ad* Lactantium *de Mort. Persequut.* cap. xliv. Christ. Thomasius, *Observat. Hallens.* tom. i. p. 380.

[*z*] Jo. And. Schmidius, *Diss. de luna in cruce visa*, Jo. Alb. Fabricius. *Diss. de cruce à Constantino visa*, in his *Biblioth. Græca.* vol. vi. cap. i. p. 8, &c.

☞ [*a*] This hypothesis of Dr. Mosheim is not more credible than the real appearance of a cross in the air.—Both events are recorded by the same authority. And, if the veracity of Constantine or of Eusebius, are questioned with respect to the appearance of a cross in the day, they can scarcely be confided in with respect to the truth of the nocturnal vision. It is very surprising to see the learned authors of the *Universal History* adopt, without exception, all the accounts of Eusebius concerning this cross, which are extremely liable to suspicion; which Eusebius himself seems to have believed but in part, and for the truth of all which he is careful not to make himself answerable. (See that author *De vita Constant.* lib. ii. cap. ix.

This whole story is attended with difficulties which render it, both as a miracle and as a fact, extremely dubious, to say no

which remains, is, that we consider this famous cross as a vision represented to the emperor in a dream, with the remarkable inscription, HAC VINCE, *i. e. In this conquer;* and this latter opinion is maintained by authors of considerable weight [*aa*].

The Christians persecuted by Licinius.

X. The joy with which the Christians were elated on account of the favourable edicts of Constantine and Licinius, was soon interrupted by

no more.—It will necessarily be asked, whence it comes to pass, that the relation of a fact, which is said to have been seen by the whole army, is delivered by Eusebius, upon the sole credit of Constantine? This is the more unaccountable, that Eusebius lived and conversed with many that must have been spectators of this event, had it really happened, and whose unanimous testimony would have prevented the necessity of Constantine's confirming it to him by an oath. The sole relation of one man, concerning a public appearance, is not sufficient to give complete conviction; nor does it appear that this story was generally believed by the Christians, or by others, since several ecclesiastical historians, who wrote after Eusebius, particularly Ruffin and Sozomen, make no mention of this appearance of a cross in the heavens. The nocturnal *vision* was, it must be confessed, more generally known and believed. Upon which Dr. Lardner makes this conjecture, that when Constantine first informed the people of the reason that induced him to make use of the sign of the cross in his army, he alleged nothing but a dream for that purpose; but that, in the latter part of his life, when he was acquainted with Eusebius, he added the other particular, of a *luminous cross* seen *somewhere* by him and his army in the day-time (for the place is not mentioned;) and that, the emperor having related this in the most solemn manner, Eusebius thought himself obliged to mention it.

[*aa*] All the writers, who have given any accounts of Constantine the Great, are carefully enumerated by J. A. Fabricius, in his *Lux. Salut. Evang. toti orbi exor.* cap. xii. p. 260. who also mentions, cap. xiii. p. 287. the laws concerning religious matters, which were enacted by this emperor, and digested into four parts. For a full account of these laws see Jac. Godofred. *Adnotat. ad Codic. Theodos.* and Balduinus, in his *Constantin. Magn. seu de legibus Constantini Eccles. et Civilibus,* lib. ii. of which a second edition was published, at *Hall,* by Gundling, in 8vo, in the year 1727.

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the war which broke out between these two princes. Licinius, being defeated in a pitched battle, in the year 314, made a treaty of peace with Constantine, and observed it during the space of nine years. But his turbulent spirit rendered him an enemy to repose; and his natural violence seconded, and still further incensed, by the suggestions of the Heathen priests, armed him against Constantine, in the year 324, for the second time. During this war, he endeavoured to engage in his cause all those who remained attached to the ancient superstition, that thus he might oppress his adversary with numbers; and, in order to this, he persecuted the Christians in a cruel manner, and put to death many of their bishops, after trying them with torments of the most barbarous nature [*b*]. But all his enterprizes proved abortive; for, after several battles fought without success, he was reduced to the necessity of throwing himself at the victor's feet, and imploring his clemency; which, however, he did not long enjoy; for he was strangled by the orders of Constantine, in the year 325. After the defeat of Licinius, the empire was ruled by Con-

[*b*] Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. x. cap. viii. Id *De vita Constantini*, lib. i. cap. xlix. Julian himself, whose bitter aversion to Constantine gives a singular degree of credibility to his testimony in this matter, could not help confessing that Licinius was an infamous tyrant and a profligate, abandoned to all sorts of wickedness. See the Cæsars *of* Julian, p. 222. of the French edition by Spanheim. And here I beg leave to make a remark which has escaped the learned, and that is, that Aurelius Victor, in his book *de Cæsaribus* cap. xli. p. 435. edit. Arntzenii, has mentioned the persecution under Licinius in the following terms: "Licinio ne insontium qui-"dem ac nobilium philosophorum servili more cruciatus adhi-"biti modum fecere." The philosophers, whom Licinius is here said to have tormented, were doubtless, the Christians, whom many, through ignorance, looked upon as a philosophical sect. This passage of Aurelius has not been touched by the commentators, who are too generally more intent upon the knowledge of words than of things.

Constantine alone unto his death, and the Christian cause experienced, in its happy progress, the effects of his auspicious administration. This zealous prince employed all the resources of his genius, all the authority of his laws, and all the engaging charms of his munificence and liberality, to efface, by degrees, the superstitions of Paganism, and to propagate Christianity in every corner of the Roman empire. He had learned, no doubt, from the disturbances continually excited by Licinius, that neither himself nor the empire could enjoy a fixed state of tranquillity and safety as long as the ancient superstitions subsisted; and therefore, from this period, he openly opposed the sacred rites of Paganism, as a religion detrimental to the interests of the state.

The state of the church under the sons of Constantine the Great.

XI. After the death of Constantine, which happened in the year 337, his three sons, *Constantine II. Constantius*, and *Constans*, were, in consequence of his appointment, put in possession of the empire, and were all saluted as emperors and *Augusti* by the Roman senate. There were yet living two brothers of the late emperor, *viz. Constantius Dalmatius* and *Julius Constantius*, and they had several sons. These the sons of *Constantine* ordered to be put to death, lest their ambitious views should excite troubles in the empire [*c*]; and they all fell victims to this barbarous order, except *Gallus* and *Julian*, the sons of *Julius Constantius*,

☞ [*c*] It is more probable that the principal design of this massacre was to recover the provinces of *Thrace, Macedon*, and *Achaia*, which, in the division of the empire, Constantine the Great had given to young Dalmatius, son to his brother of the same name; and *Pontus* and *Cappadocia*, which he had granted to Annibalianus the brother of young Dalmatius. Be that as it will, Dr. Mosheim has attributed this massacre equally to the three sons of Constantine; whereas almost all authors agree, that neither young Constantine, nor Constans had any hand in it all.

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stantius, the latter of whom rose afterwards to the imperial dignity. The dominions allotted to Constantine were *Britain*, *Gaul*, and *Spain;* but he did not possess them long, for, having made himself master, by force, of several places belonging to *Constans*, this occasioned a war between the two brothers, in the year 340, in which Constantine lost his life. *Constans*, who had received, at first for his portion, *Illyricum*, *Italy*, and *Africa*, added now the dominions of the deceased prince to his own, and thus became sole master of all the western provinces. He remained in possession of this vast territory until the year 350, when he was cruelly assassinated by the orders of Magnentius, one of his commanders, who had revolted and declared himself emperor. Magnentius, in his turn, met with the fate he deserved; transported with rage and despair at his ill success in the war against *Constantius*, and apprehending the most terrible and ignominious death from the just resentment of the conqueror, he laid violent hands upon himself. Thus *Constantius*, who had, before this, possessed the provinces of *Asia*, *Syria*, and *Egypt*, became, in the year 353, sole lord of the Roman empire, which he ruled until the year 361, when he died at *Mopsucrene*, on the borders of *Cilicia*, as he was marching against Julian. None of these three brothers possessed the spirit and genius of their father. They all, indeed, followed his example, in continuing to abrogate and efface the ancient superstitions of the Romans and other idolatrous nations, and to accelerate the progress of the Christian religion throughout the empire. This zeal was, no doubt, laudable; its end was excellent; but, in the means used to accomplish it, there were many things worthy of blame.

XII. This flourishing progress of the Christian religion was greatly interrupted, and the church reduced

reduced to the brink of destruction, when Julian, the son of Julius Constantius, and the only remaining branch of the imperial family, was placed at the head of affairs. This active and adventurous prince, after having been declared emperor by the army, in the year 380, in consequence of his exploits among the Gauls, was upon the death of Constantius, the year following, confirmed in the undivided possession of the empire. No event could be less favourable to the Christians. For, though he had been educated in the principles of Christianity, yet he apostatised from that divine religion, and employed all his efforts to restore the expiring superstitions of polytheism to their former vigour, credit, and lustre. This apostasy of Julian from the gospel of Christ to the worship of the gods, was owing, partly to his aversion to the Constantine family, who had embrued their hands in the blood of his father, brother, and kinsman; and partly to the artifices of the Platonic philosophers, who abused his credulity, and flattered his ambition, by fictitious miracles, and pompous predictions. It is true, this prince seemed averse to the use of violence, in propagating superstition, and suppressing the truth; nay, he carried the appearances of moderation and impartiality so far, as to allow his subjects a full power of judging for themselves in religious matters, and of worshipping the Deity in the manner they thought the most rational. But, under this mask of moderation, he attacked Christianity with the utmost bitterness, and, at the same time, with the most consummate dexterity. By art and stratagem he undermined the church, removing the privileges that were granted to Christians, and their spiritual rulers; shutting up the schools in which they taught philosophy and the liberal arts; encouraging the sectaries and schismatics, who brought dishonour

Julian attempts the destruction of Christianity.

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dishonour upon the gospel by their divisions; composing books against the Christians, and using a variety of other means to bring the religion of Jesus to ruin and contempt. Julian extended his views yet further, and was meditating projects of a still more formidable nature against the Christian church, which would have felt, no doubt, the fatal and ruinous effects of his inveterate hatred, if he had returned victorious from the Persian war, which he entered into immediately after his accession to the empire. But in this war, which was rashly undertaken and imprudently conducted, he fell by the lance of a Persian soldier, and expired in his tent in the 32d year of his age, having reigned, alone, after the death of Constantius, twenty months [*d*].

His character.

XII. It is to me just matter of surprise, to find Julian placed, by many learned and judicious writers [*e*], among the greatest heroes that shine forth in the annals of time; nay, exalted above all the princes and legislators that have been distinguished by the wisdom of their government. Such writers must either be too far blinded by prejudice, to perceive the truth; or, they must never have perused, with any degree of attention, those works of Julian that are still extant; or, if neither of these be their case, they must, at least, be ignorant of that which constitutes true greatness. The real character of Julian has few lines of

[*d*] For a full account of this emperor, it will be proper to consult (besides Tillemont and other common writers) *La vie de Julien, par l'Abbé* Bletterie, which is a most accurate and elegant production. See also, *The Life and Character of* Julian, illustrated in seven Dissertations by Des Voeux Ezech. Spanheim. *Præfat, et adnot. add opp.* Juliani; and Fabricii, *Lux Evangel. toti orbi exoriens,* cap. xiv. p. 294.

[*e*] Montesquieu, in chap. x. of the twenty-fourth book of his work, intitled, *L'Esprit des loix,* speaks of Julian in the following terms: "Il n'y a point eu après lui de Prince plus "digne de gouverner des hommes."

of that uncommon merit that has been attributed to it; for, if we set aside his genius, of which his works give no very high idea; if we except, moreover, his military courage, his love of letters, and his acquaintance with that vain and fanatical philosophy which was known by the name of modern Platonism, we shall find nothing remaining, that is, in any measure, worthy of praise, or productive of esteem. Besides, the qualities now mentioned, were, in him, counterbalanced by the most opprobrious defects. He was a slave to superstition, than which nothing is a more evident mark of a narrow soul, of a mean and abject spirit. His thirst of glory and popular applause were excessive, even to puerility; his credulity and levity surpass the powers of description; a low cunning, and a profound dissimulation and duplicity, had acquired, in his mind, the force of predominant habits; and all this was accompanied with a total and perfect ignorance of true philosophy [*f*]. So that, though, in some things, Julian may be allowed to have excelled the sons of Constantine the Great, yet it must be granted on the other hand, that he was, in many respects, inferior to Constantine himself, whom, upon all occasions, he loads with the most licentious invectives, and treats with the utmost disdain.

XIV. As Julian affected in general, to appear moderate in religious matters, unwilling to trouble any on account of their faith, or to seem averse to any sect or party, so to the Jews, in particular, he extended so far the marks of his indulgence, as to permit them to rebuild the temple

The Jews attempt in vain to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem.

☞ [*f*] Nothing can afford a more evident proof of Julian's ignorance of the true philosophy, than his known attachment to the study of magic, which Dr. Mosheim has omitted in his enumeration of the defects and extravagancies of this prince.

temple of *Jerusalem*. The Jews set about this important work; from which, however, they were obliged to desist, before they had even begun to lay the foundations of the sacred edifice. For, while they were removing the rubbish, formidable balls of fire, issuing out of the ground with a dreadful noise, dispersed both the works and the workmen, and repeated earthquakes filled the spectators of this astonishing phenomenon with terror and dismay. This signal event is attested in a manner that renders its evidence irresistible [*g*], though, as usually happens in cases of that nature, the Christians have embellished it by augmenting rashly the number of the miracles that are supposed to have been wrought upon that occasion. The causes of this phenomenon may furnish matter of dispute; and learned men have, in effect, been divided upon that point. All, however, who consider the matter with attention and impartiality, will perceive the strongest reasons for embracing the opinion of those who attribute this event to the almighty interposition of the Supreme Being; nor do the arguments offered by some, to prove it the effect of natural causes, or those alleged by others to persuade us that it was the result of artifice and imposture, contain any thing that may not be refuted with the utmost facility [*h*].

XV.

[*g*] See Jo. Alb. Fabricii *Lux Evang. toti orbi exoriens*, p. 124. where all the testimonies of this remarkable event are carefully assembled; see also Moyle's *Posthumous Works*, p. 101, &c.

[*h*] The truth of this miracle is denied by the famous Basnage, *Histoire des Juifs*, tom. iv. p. 1257. against whom Cuper has taken the affirmative, and defended it in his *Letters* published by Bayer, p. 400. A most ingenious discourse has been published lately in defence of this miracle, by the learned Dr. Warburton, under the title of *Julian*; or, *A Discourse concerning the Earthquake and Fiery Eruption*, &c. in which the objections of Basnage are particularly examined and refuted.

XV. Upon the death of Julian, the suffrages of the army were united in favour of Jovian, who, accordingly, succeeded him in the imperial dignity. After a reign of seven months, Jovian died in the year 364, and therefore, had not time to execute any thing of importance [*i*]. The emperors who succeeded him, in this century, were Valentinian I. Valens, Gratian, Valentinian II. and Honorius, who professed Christianity, promoted its progress, and endeavoured, though not all with equal zeal, to root out entirely the Gentile superstitions. In this they were all surpassed by the last of the emperors who reigned in this century, *viz.* Theodosius the Great, who came to the empire in the year 379, and died in the year 395. As long as this prince lived, he exerted himself, in the most vigorous and effectual manner, in the extirpation of the Pagan superstitions throughout all the provinces, and enacted severe laws and penalties against such as adhered to them. His sons, Arcadius and Honorius, pursued with zeal, and not without success, the same end; so that, towards the conclusion of this century, the Gentile religions declined apace, and had also no prospect left of recovering their primitive authority and splendor.

The state of the church after the death of Julian.

XVI. It is true, that, notwithstanding all this zeal and severity of the Christian emperors, there still remained in several places, and especially in the remoter provinces, temples and religious rites consecrated to the service of the Pagan deities. And, indeed, when we look attentively into the matter, we shall find, that the execution of those rigorous

Remains of paganism.

[*i*] See Bletterie, *Vie de Jovien*, vol. ii. published at *Paris* in 1748, in which the *Life of Julian*, by the same author is further illustrated, and some productions of that emperor translated into French.

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rigorous laws that were enacted against the worshippers of the gods, was rather levelled at the multitude, than at persons of eminence and distinction. For it appears, that both during the reign, and after the death of Theodosius, many of the most honourable and important posts were filled by persons, whose aversion to Christianity, and whose attachment to Paganism, were sufficiently known. The example of Libanus alone is an evident proof of this; since, notwithstanding his avowed and open enmity to the Christians, he was raised by Theodosius himself to the high dignity of prefect, or chief of the Pretorian guards. It is extremely probable, therefore, that in the execution of the severe laws enacted against the Pagans, there was an exception made in favour of philosophers, rhetoricians, and military leaders, on account of the important services which they were supposed to render to the state, and that they of consequence enjoyed more liberty in religious matters, than the inferior orders of men.

The efforts of the philosophers against Christianity.

XVII. This peculiar regard shewn to the philosophers and rhetoricians will, no doubt, appear surprising when it is considered, that all the force of their genius, and all the resources of their art, were employed against Christianity; and that those very sages, whose schools were reputed of such utility to the state, were the very persons who opposed the progress of the truth with the greatest vehemence and contention of mind. Hierocles, the great ornament of the Platonic school, wrote, in the beginning of this century, two books against the Christians, in which he went so far as to draw a parallel between Jesus Christ and Apollonius Tyanaeus. This presumption was chastised with great spirit, by Eusebius, in a particular treatise written expressly in answer to Hierocles. Lactantius takes notice

tice of another philosopher, who composed three books to detect the pretended errors of the Christians [*k*], but does not mention his name. After the time of Constantine the Great, besides the long and laborious work which Julian wrote against the followers of Christ, Himerius [*l*] and Libanus, in their public harangues, and Eunapius, in his lives of the philosophers, exhausted all their rage and bitterness in their efforts to defame the Christian religion; while the calumnies that abounded in the discourses of the one, and the writings of the other, passed unpunished.

The prejudices which the Christian cause received from the philosophers.

XVIII. The prejudice which the Christian cause received in this century, from the stratagems of these philosophers and rhetoricians, who were elated with a presumptuous notion of their knowledge, and prepossessed with a bitter aversion to the gospel, was certainly very considerable. Many examples concurred to prove this; and particularly that of Julian, who was seduced by the artifices of these corrupt sophists. The effects of their disputes and declamations were not, indeed, the same upon all; some who assumed the appearance of superior wisdom, and who, either from moderation or indifference, professed to pursue a middle way in these religious controversies, composed matters in the following manner: They gave so far their ear to the interpretations and discourses of the rhetoricians, as to form to themselves a middle kind of religion, between the ancient theology, and the new doctrine that was now propagated in the empire; and they persuaded themselves, that the same truths which Christ taught, had been, for a long time, concealed by the priests of the gods.

[*k*] *Institut. Divin.* lib. v. cap. ii. p. 535.
[*l*] See Photius *Biblioth. Cod.* cap. lxv. p. 355.

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gods, under the veil of ceremonies, fables, and allegorical representations [*m*]. Of this number were *Ammianus Marcellinus*, a man of singular merit; *Themistius*, an orator highly distinguished by his uncommon eloquence, and the eminence of his station; *Chalcidius*, a philosopher, and others, who were all of opinion, that the two religions, when properly interpreted and understood, agreed perfectly well in the main points; and that, therefore, neither the religion of Christ, nor that of the gods, were to be treated with contempt.

XIX.

☞ [*m*] This notion, absurd as it is, has been revived, in the most extravagant manner, in a work published at *Harderwyk*, in *Guelderland*, in the year 1757, by Mr. Struchtmeyer, professor of eloquence and languages in that university. In this work, which bears the title of the Symbolical Hercules, the learned and wrong-headed author maintains (as he had also done in a preceding work, entitled, *An Explication of the Pagan Theology*,) that all the doctrines of Christianity were emblematically represented in the Heathen mythology; and not only so, but that the inventors of that mythology knew that the Son of God was to descend upon earth; believed in Christ as the only fountain of salvation; were persuaded of his future incarnation, death, and resurrection: and had acquired all this knowledge and faith by the perusal of a Bible much older than either Moses or Abraham, &c. the Pagan doctors thus instructed (according to Mr. Struchtmeyer) in the mysteries of Christianity, taught these truths under the veil of *emblems*, *types*, and *figures*. Jupiter represented the *true God*; Juno, who was obstinate and ungovernable, was the emblem of the *ancient* Israel; and chaste Diana was a type of the *Christian church*; Hercules was the figure, or fore-runner of Christ; Amphitryon was Joseph; the two *Serpents*, that Hercules killed in his cradle, were the Pharisees and Sadducees, &c. Such are the principal lines of Mr. Struchtmeyer's system, which shews the sad havock that a warm imagination, undirected by a just and solid judgment, makes in religion. It is, however, honourable perhaps to the present age, that a system from which Ammianus Marcellinus, and other philosophers of old, derived applause, will be generally looked upon, at present, as intitling its restorer to a place in *Bedlam*.

Progress of Christianity.

XIX. The zeal and diligence with which Constantine and his successors exerted themselves in the cause of Christianity, and in extending the limits of the church, prevent our surprise at the number of barbarous and uncivilized nations, which received the gospel [*n*]. It appears highly probable, from many circumstances, that both the *Greater* and the *Lesser Armenia* were enlightened with the knowledge of the truth, not long after the first rise of Christianity. The Armenian church was not, however, completely formed and established before this century; in the commencement of which, Gregory, the son of Anax, who is commonly called the *Enlightener*, from his having dispelled the darkness of the Armenian superstitions, converted to Christianity Tiridates, king of *Armenia*, and all the nobles of his court. In consequence of this, Gregory was consecrated bishop of the Armenians, by Leontius, bishop of *Cappadocia*, and his ministry was crowned with such success, that the whole province was soon converted to the Christian faith [*o*].

Among the Abassines, or Ethiopians.

XX. Towards the middle of this century, a certain person named Frumentius, came from *Egypt* to *Abassia*, or *Ethiopia*, whose inhabitants derived the name of Axumitæ from Axuma, the capital city of that country. He made known among this people the gospel of Christ, and administered the sacrament of baptism to their king, and to several persons of the first distinction at his court. As Frumentius was returning from

[*n*] Gaudentii *vita Philastrii*, sect. 3. Philastrius *De hæres. Præf.* p. 5. edit. Fabricii. Socrates, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. i. cap. xix. Georgius Cedrenus, *Chronograph.* p. 234. edit. Paris.

[*o*] *Narratio de rebus Armeniæ in* Franc. Comdefisii *Auctario Biblioth. Patrum Græcor.* tom. ii. p. 287. Mich. Lequien *Oriens Christianus*, tom. i. p. 419. 1356. Jo. Joach. Schroderi *Thesaur. linguæ Armenicæ*, p. 149.

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hence into *Egypt*, he received consecration, as the first bishop of the Axumitæ, or Ethiopians, from Athanasius. And this is the reason why the Ethiopian church has, even to our times, been considered as the daughter of the Alexandrian, from which it also receives its bishop [*p*].

And Georgians.

The light of the gospel was introduced into *Iberia*, a province of *Asia*, now called *Georgia*, in the following manner: A certain woman was carried into that country as a captive, during the reign of Constantine the Great, and by the grandeur of her miracles, and the remarkable sanctity of her life and manners, she made such an impression upon the king and queen, that they abandoned their false gods, embraced the faith of the gospel, and sent to *Constantinople*, for proper persons to give them and their people a more satisfactory and complete knowledge of the Christian religion [*q*].

And Goths.

XXI. A considerable part of the Goths, who had inhabited *Thrace*, *Mœsia*, and *Dacia*, had received the knowledge, and embraced the doctrines of Christianity before this century; and Theophilus, their bishop, was present at the council of *Nice*. Constantine the Great, after having vanquished them and the Samaritans, engaged great numbers of them to become Christians [*r*]. But still a large body continued in their attachment to their ancient superstition, until the time of the emperor Valens. This prince

[*p*] Athanasius, *Apolog. ad Constantium*, tom. i. opp. par. II. p. 315. edit. Benedict. Socrates et Sozomen. *Hist. Eccles.* book i. chap. xix. of the former, book ii. chap. xxiv. of the latter. Theodoret. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. i. cap. xxiii. p. 54. Ludolf. *Comment. ad Hist. Æthiopic.* p. 281. Hier. Lobo, *Voyage d'Abyssinie*, tom. ii. p. 13. Justus Fontaninus, *Hist. Litter. Aquileiæ*, p. 174.

[*q*] Rufinus *Hist. Eccles.* lib. i. cap. x. Sozomen. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. ii. cap. v. Lequien, *Oriens. Chris.* tom. i. p. 1333.

[*r*] Socrat. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. i. cap. xviii.

prince permitted them, indeed, to pass the *Danube*, and to inhabit *Dacia*, *Mœsia*, and *Thrace*; but it was on condition, that they should live in subjection to the Roman laws, and embrace the profession of Christianity [*c*], which condition was accepted by their king Fritigern. The celebrated Ulphilas, bishop of those Goths, who dwelt in *Mœsia*, lived in this century, and distinguished himself much by his genius and piety. Among other eminent services which he rendered to his country, he invented a set of letters for their peculiar use, and translated the scriptures into the Gothic language [*t*].

Among the Gauls.

XXII. There remained still, in the European provinces, an incredible number of persons, who adhered to the worship of the gods; and though the Christian bishops continued their pious efforts to gain them over to the gospel, yet the success was, by no means, proportionable to their diligence and zeal, and the work of conversion went on but slowly. In *Gaul*, the great and venerable Martin, bishop of *Tours*, set about this important work with tolerable success. For, in his various voyages among the Gauls, he converted many, every where, by the energy of his discourses, and by the power of his miracles, if we may rely upon the testimony of Sulpitius Severus in this matter. He destroyed also the temples of the gods, pulled down their statues [*u*],

[*s*] Socrat. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. iv. cap. xxxiii. Lequien, *Oriens Chris.* tom. i. p. 1240, Eric. Benzelius, *Præf. ad Quator Evangelia Gothica, quæ* Ulphilæ *tribuuntur*, cap. v. p. xviii. published at Oxford, in the year 1750, in 4to.

[*t*] Jo. Jac. Mascovii *Historia Germanorum*, tom. i. p. 317. tom. ii. not. p. 49. *Acta SS. Martii*, tom. iii. p. 619. Benzelius, *loc. citat.* cap. viii. p. 30.

[*u*] See Sulpit. Severus, *Dial.* i. *De Vita Martini*, cap. xiii. p. 20. cap. xv. p. 22. cap. xvii. p. 23. *Dial.* ii. p. 106. edit. Hier. a Prato, Verona, 1741.

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and on all these accounts merited the high and honourable title of Apostle of the Gauls.

The causes of so many changes.

XXIII. There is no doubt, but that the victories of Constantine the Great, the fear of punishment, and the desire of pleasing this mighty conqueror, and his imperial successors, were the weighty arguments that moved whole nations, as well as particular persons, to embrace Christianity. None, however, that have any acquaintance with the transactions of this period of time, will attribute the whole progress of Christianity to these causes. For it is undeniably manifest, that the indefatigable zeal of the bishops and other pious men, the innocence and sanctity which shone forth with such lustre in the lives of many Christians, the translations that were published of the sacred writings, and the intrinsic beauty and excellence of the Christian religion, made as strong and deep impressions upon some, as worldly views and selfish considerations did upon others.

As to the miracles attributed to Antony, Paul the Hermit, and Martin, I give them up without the least difficulty, and join with those who treat these pretended prodigies with the contempt they deserve [*w*]. I am also willing to grant, that many events have been rashly esteemed miraculous, which were the result of the ordinary laws of nature; and also, that several pious frauds have been imprudently made use of, to give new degrees of weight and dignity to the Christian cause. But I cannot, on the other hand, assent to the opinions of those who maintain, that, in this century, miracles had entirely ceased;

[*w*] Hier. a Prato, in his Preface to Sulpitius Severus, (p. xiii.) disputes warmly in favour of the miracles of Martin, and also of the other prodigies of this century.

ceased; and that, at this period, the Christian church was not favoured with any extraordinary or supernatural mark of a divine power engaged in its cause [*x*].

Persecutions in Persia.

XXIV. The Christians, who lived under the Roman government, were not afflicted with any severe calamities from the time of Constantine the Great, except those which they suffered during the troubles and commotions raised by Licinius, and under the transitory reign of Julian. Their tranquillity, however, was, at different times, disturbed in several places. Among others, Athanaric, king of the Goths, persecuted, for some time, with bitterness, that part of the Gothic nation which had embraced Christianity [*y*]. In the remoter provinces, the Pagans often defended their ancient superstitions by the force of arms, and massacred the Christians, who, in the propagation of their religion, were not always sufficiently attentive either to the rules of prudence, or the dictates of humanity [*z*]. The Christians who lived beyond the limits of the Roman empire, had a harder fate; Sapor II. king of *Persia*, vented his rage against those of his dominions, in three dreadful persecutions. The first of these happened in the 18th year of the reign of that prince; the second, in the 30; and the third, in the 31st year of the same reign. This last was the most cruel and destructive of the

 three;

[*x*] See Eusebius' book against Hierocles, chap. iv. p. 431. edit. Olearii; as also Henr. Dodwell. *Diss.* ii. *in Irenæum.* sect. 55. p. 195. ☞ See Dr. Middleton's *Free Inquiry into the Miraculous Powers which are said to have subsisted in the Christian Church,* &c. in which a very different opinion is maintained. See, however, on the other side the answers of Church and Dodwell to Middleton's *Inquiry.*

[*y*] See Theodor. Ruinarti *Acta Martyr. sincera,* and there *Acta S. Sabæ,* p. 598.

[*z*] See Ambrosius, *De officiis,* lib. i. cap. xlii. sect. 17.

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three; it carried off an incredible number of Christians, and continued during the space of forty years, having commenced in the year 330, and ceased only in 370. It was not, however, the religion of the Christians, but the ill-grounded suspicion of their treasonable designs against the state, that drew upon them this terrible calamity. For the Magi and the Jews persuaded the Persian monarch, that all the Christians were devoted to the interests of the Roman emperor, and that Symeon archbishop of *Seleucia*, and *Ctesiphon*, sent to *Constantinople* intelligence of all that passed in *Persia* [*a*].

[*a*] See Sozomen. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. ii. cap. i. xiii. There is a particular and express account of this persecution in the *Bibliothec. Oriental. Clement. Vatican.* tom. i. p. 6. 16. 181. tom. iii. p. 52. with which it will be proper to compare the Preface of the learned Asseman, to his *Acta martyrum oriental et occidental.* published in two volumes in folio, at *Rome*, in the year 1748; as this author has published the *Persian Martyrology* in Syriac, with a Latin translation, and enriched this valuable work with many excellent observations.

PART II.

The INTERNAL HISTORY of the CHURCH.

CHAP. I.

Which contains the history of learning and philosophy.

The state of learning.

I. PHILOLOGY, eloquence, poetry, and history, were the branches of science particularly cultivated at this time, by those among the Greeks and Latins, who were desirous to make a figure in the learned world. But though several persons of both nations acquired a certain degree of reputation by their literary pursuits, yet they came all far short of the summit of fame. The best poets of this period, such as Ausonius appear insipid, harsh, and inelegant, when compared with the sublime bards of the Augustan age. The rhetoricians, departing now from the noble simplicity and majesty of the ancients, instructed the youth in the fallacious art of pompous declamation; and the greatest part of the historical writers were more set upon embellishing their narrations with vain and tawdry ornaments, than upon rendering them interesting by their order, perspicuity, and truth.

The progress of the Platonic philosophy.

II. Almost all the philosophers of this age were of that sect which we have already distinguished by the title of Modern Platonics. It is not therefore suprising, that we find the principles of Platonism in all the writings of the Christians. The number, however, of these philosophers was not so considerable in the west as in the eastern countries. Jamblichus of *Chalcis* explained, in

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Syria, the philosophy of Plato, or rather propagated his own particular opinions under that respectable name. He was an obscure and credulous man, and his turn of mind was highly superstitious and chimerical, as his writings abundantly testify [*b*]. His successors were Ædesius, Maximus, and others, whose follies and puerilities are exposed, at length, by Eunapius. Hypatia, a female philosopher of distinguished merit and learning. Isidorus, Olympiodorus, Synesius, afterwards a Semi-Christian, with others of inferior reputation, were the principal persons concerned in propagating this new modification of Platonism.

Its fate.

III. As the emperor Julian was passionately attached to this sect, (which his writings abundantly prove), he employed every method to increase its authority and lustre; and, for that purpose, engaged in its cause several men of learning and genius, who vied with each other in exalting its merit and excellence [*c*]. But, after his death, a dreadful storm of persecution arose, under the reign of Valentinian, against the Platonists; many of whom, being accused of magical practices, and other heinous crimes, were capitally convicted. During these commotions, Maximus, the master and favourite of Julian, by whose persuasions this emperor had been engaged

☞ [*b*] Dr. Mosheim speaks here of only one Jamblichus, though there were three persons who bore that name. It is not easy to determine which of them was the author of those works that have reached our times under the name of Jamblichus; but whoever it was, he does not certainly deserve so mean a character as our learned historian here gives him.

[*c*] See the learned Baron Ezekiel Spanheim's *Preface to the works of* Julian; and that also which he has prefixed to his French translation of Julian's *Cæsars*, p. 111. and his Annotations to the latter, p. 234; see also Bletterie, *Vie de l' Empereur Julien*, lib. i. p. 26.

gaged to renounce Christianity, and to apply himself to the study of magic, was put to death with several others [*d*]. It is probable, indeed, that the friendship and intimacy that had subsisted between the apostate emperor and these pretended sages were greater crimes, in the eye of Valentinian, than either their philosophical system or their magic arts. And hence it happened, that such of the sect as lived at a distance from the court, were not involved in the dangers or calamities of this persecution.

The state of learning among the Christians.

IV. From the time of *Constantine* the *Great*, the Christians applied themselves with more zeal and diligence to the study of philosophy and of the liberal arts, than they had formerly done. The emperors encouraged this taste for the sciences, and left no means unemployed to excite and maintain a spirit of literary emulation among the professors of Christianity. For this purpose, schools were established in many cities; libraries were also erected, and men of learning and genius were nobly recompensed by the honours and advantages that were attached to the culture of the sciences and arts [*e*]. All this was indispensibly necessary to the successful execution of the scheme that was laid for abrogating, by degrees, the worship of the gods. For the ancient religion was maintained, and its credit supported by the erudition and talents which distinguished in so many places the sages of paganism. And there was just reason to apprehend, that the truth might suffer, if the Christian youth, for

[*d*] Ammian. Marcellin. *Historiarum*, lib. xxix. cap. i. p. 556. edit. Valesii. Bletterie, *Vie de Julien*, p. 30—155. 159. and *Vie de Jovien*, tom. i. p. 194.

[*e*] See Godofred. *ad codicis Theodos. titulos de professoribus et artibus liberalibus.* Franc. Balduinus *in Constantino M.* p. 122. Herm. Conringii *Dissert. de studiis Romæ et Constantinop.* at the end of his *Antiquitates Academicæ.*

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for want of proper masters and instructors of their own religion, should have recourse, for their education, to the schools of the Pagan philosophers and rhetoricians.

Many illiterate Christians.

V. From what has been here said concerning the state of learning among the Christians we would not have any conclude, that an acquaintance with the sciences was become universal in the church of Christ. For, as yet, there was no law enacted, which excluded the ignorant and illiterate, from ecclesiastical preferments and offices; and it is certain, that the greatest part both of the bishops and presbyters were men entirely destitute of all learning and education. Besides, that savage and illiterate party, who looked upon all sorts of erudition, particularly that of a philosophical kind, as pernicious, and even destructive to true piety and religion, increased both in number and authority. The ascetics, monks, and hermits, augmented the strength of this barbarous faction; and not only the women, but also all who took solemn looks, sordid garments, and a love of solitude, for real piety (and in this number we comprehend the generality of mankind) were vehemently prepossessed in their favour.

CHAP. II.

Concerning the government of the church, and the Christian doctors, during this century.

The form of government in the Christian church.

I. CONSTANTINE the Great made no essential alterations in the form of government that took place in the Christian church before his time; he only corrected it in some particulars, and gave it a greater extent. For though

though he permitted the church to remain a body-politic, distinct from that of the state, as it had formerly been, yet he assumed to himself the supreme power over this sacred body, and the right of modelling and governing it in such a manner, as should be most conducive to the public good. This right he enjoyed without any opposition, as none of the bishops presumed to call his authority in question. The people therefore continued as usual, to choose freely their bishops and their teachers. The bishop governed the church, and managed the Ecclesiastical affairs of the city or district, where he presided in council with the presbyters, and with a due regard to the suffrages of the whole assembly of the people. The provincial bishops assembled in council, deliberated together concerning those matters that related to the interests of the churches of a whole province, as also concerning religious controversies, the forms and rites of divine service, and other things of like moment. To these lesser councils, which were composed of the ecclesiastical deputies of one or more provinces, were afterwards added *œcumenical councils*, consisting of commissioners from all the churches in the Christian world, and which, consequently represented the church universal. These were established by the authority of the emperor, who assembled the first of these universal councils at Nice. This prince thought it equitable, that questions of superior importance, and such as intimately concerned the interests of Christianity in general, should be examined and decided in assemblies that represented the whole body of the Christian church; and in this it is highly probable, that his judgment was directed by that of the bishops. There were never, indeed, any councils held, which could, with strict propriety, be called *universal;* those, however, whose laws and

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and decrees were approved and admitted by the universal church, or the greatest part of that sacred body, are commonly called *œcumenical* or *general* councils.

Changes introduced with respect to the rights of the several orders of the church.

II. The rights and privileges of the several ecclesiastical orders were, however, gradually changed and diminished, from the time that the church began to be torn with divisions, and agitated with those violent dissensions and tumults, to which the elections of bishops, the diversity of religious opinions, and other things of a like nature too frequently gave rise. In these religious quarrels, the weaker generally fled to the court for protection and succour; and thereby furnished the emperors with a favourable opportunity of setting limits to the power of the bishops, of infringing the liberties of the people, and of modifying, in various ways, the ancient customs according to their pleasure. And, indeed, even the bishops themselves, whose opulence and authority were considerably increased since the reign of *Constantine*, began to introduce, gradually, innovations into the forms of ecclesiastical discipline, and to change the ancient government of the church. Their first step was an entire exclusion of the people from all part in the administration of ecclesiastical affairs; and afterwards, they by degrees divested even the *presbyters* of their ancient privileges, and their primitive authority, that they might have no importunate protesters to controul their ambition, or oppose their proceedings; and principally, that they might either engross to themselves, or distribute as they thought proper, the possessions and revenues of the church. Hence it came to pass, that, at the conclusion of this century, there remained no more than a mere shadow of the ancient government of the church. Many of the privileges which had formerly belonged to the presbyters and

and people, were usurped by the bishops; and many of the rights, which had been formerly vested in the universal church, were transferred to the emperors, and to subordinate officers and magistrates.

The Ecclesiastical government modelled according to the civil.

III. *Constantine the Great,* in order to prevent civil commotions, and to fix his authority upon solid and stable foundations, made several changes, not only in the laws of the empire, but also in the form of the Roman government [*f*]. And as there were many important reasons, which induced him to suit the administration of the church to these changes in the civil constitution, this necessarily introduced, among the bishops new degrees of eminence and rank. Three prelates had, before this, enjoyed a certain degree of pre-eminence over the rest of the episcopal order, *viz.* the bishops of *Rome, Antioch,* and *Alexandria;* and to these the bishop of *Constantinople,* was added, when the imperial residence was transferred to that city. These four prelates answered to the four *prætorian prefects* created by *Constantine*; and it is possible that, in this very century, they were distinguished by the Jewish title of Patriarchs. After these, followed the *exarchs,* who had the inspection over several provinces, and answered to the appointment of certain civil officers who bore the same title. In a lower class, were the Metropolitans, who had only the government of one province, under whom were the *archbishops,* whose inspection was confined to certain districts. In this gradation, the *bishops* brought up the rear; the sphere of their authority was not, in all places, equally extensive; being in some considerably ample, and in others confined within narrow limits. To these various ecclesiastical orders,

Patriarchs.

Exarchs.

Archbishops.

Bishops.

[*f*] See Bos, *Histoire de la monarchie Francoise,* tom. i. p. 42. Giannone, *Histoire de Naples,* tom. i. p. 94, 152.

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orders, we might add that of the *chorepiscopi*, or superintendants of the country churches; but this order was, in most places, suppressed by the bishops, with a design to extend their own authority, and enlarge the sphere of their power and jurisdiction [*g*].

The administration of the church divided into external and internal.

IV. The administration of the church was divided by Constantine himself, into an *external* and an *internal* inspection [*h*]. The latter, which was committed to bishops and councils, related to *religious controversies*; the *forms of divine worship*; the *offices of the priests*; *the vices of the ecclesiastical orders*, &c. The *external* administration of the church, the emperor assumed to himself. This comprehended all those things that relate to the *outward state* and *discipline* of the church; it likewise extended to all *contests* and *debates* that should arise between the ministers of the church, superior as well as inferior, concerning their *possessions*, their *reputation*, their *rights* and *privileges*, their offences against the laws, and things of a like nature [*i*]; but no controversies that related to matters purely religious were cognizable by this *external* inspection. In consequence of this artful division of the ecclesiastical government, *Constantine* and his successors called councils, presided in them, appointed the judges of religious controversies, terminated the differences which arose between the bishops and the people, fixed the limits of the ecclesiastical provinces, took cognizance of the civil causes that subsisted between the ministers of the church, and punished the

[*g*] This appears from several passages in the useful work of Lud. Thomassinus, intitled *Disciplina Ecclesiæ vet. et novæ circa beneficia*, tom. i.

[*h*] Euseb. *De vita Constantini*, lib. iv. cap. xxiv. p. 536.

[*i*] See the imperial laws both in Justinian's *Code*, and in the Theodosian; as also Godofred. *ad Codic. Theodos.* tom. vi. p. 55, 58, 333, &c.

the crimes committed against the laws by the ordinary judges appointed for that purpose; giving over all causes purely ecclesiastical to the cognizance of bishops and councils. But this famous division of the administration of the church was never explained with perspicuity, nor determined with a sufficient degree of accuracy and precision; so that both in this and the following centuries, we find many transactions that seem absolutely inconsistent with it. We find the emperors, for example, frequently determining matters purely ecclesiastical, and that belonged to the *internal* jurisdiction of the church; and, on the other hand, nothing is more frequent than the decisions of bishops and councils concerning things that relate merely to the *external* form and government of the church.

The rank and dignity of the bishop of Rome.

V. In the episcopal order, the bishop of *Rome* was the first in rank, and was distinguished by a sort of pre-eminence over all other prelates. Prejudices arising from a great variety of causes, contributed to establish this superiority; but it was chiefly owing to certain circumstances of grandeur and opulence, by which mortals, for the most part, form their ideas of pre-eminence and dignity, and which they generally confound with the reasons of a just and legal authority. The bishop of Rome surpassed all his brethren in the magnificence and splendor of the church over which he presided; in the riches of his revenues and possessions; in the number and variety of his ministers; in his credit with the people; and in his sumptuous and splendid manner of living [*k*]. These dazzling marks of human power, these ambiguous proofs of true greatness and felicity, had such

[*k*] Ammianus Marcellinus gives a striking description of the luxury in which the Bishops of *Rome* lived, *Hist.* lib. xxvii. cap. iii. p. 337.

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such a mighty influence upon the minds of the multitude, that the see of Rome became, in this century, a most seducing object of sacerdotal ambition. Hence it happened, that when a new pontiff was to be elected by the suffrages of the presbyters and the people, the city of Rome was generally agitated with dissensions, tumults, and cabals, whose consequences were often deplorable and fatal. The intrigues and disturbances that prevailed in that city in the year 366, when, upon the death of Liberius, another pontiff was to be chosen in his place, are a sufficient proof of what we have now advanced. Upon this occasion, one faction elected Damasus to that high dignity, while the opposite party chose Ursicinus, a deacon of the vacant church, to succeed Liberius. This double election gave rise to a dangerous schism, and to a sort of civil war within the city of Rome, which was carried on with the utmost barbarity and fury, and produced the most cruel massacres and desolations. This inhuman contest ended in the victory of Damasus; but whether his cause was more just than that of Ursicinus, is a question not so easy to determine [*l*]. Neither of the two, indeed, seem to have been possessed of such principles as constitute a good Christian, much less of that exemplary virtue that should distinguish a Christian bishop.

The limits of his authority.

VI. Notwithstanding the pomp and splendor that surrounded the Roman see, it is, however, certain, that the bishops of that city had not acquired, in this century, that pre-eminence of power and jurisdiction in the church which they afterwards enjoyed. In the ecclesiastical commonwealth, they were, indeed, the most eminent order

[*l*] Among the others writers of the papal history, see Bower's *History of the Popes*, vol. i. p. 180, 181, 182.

order of citizens; but still they were citizens, as well as their brethren, and subject, like them, to the edicts and laws of the emperors. All religious causes of extraordinary importance were examined and determined, either by judges appointed by the emperors, or in councils assembled for that purpose; while those of inferior moment were decided, in each district, by its respective bishop. The ecclesiastical laws were enacted, either by the emperor, or by councils. None of the bishops acknowledged that they derived their authority from the permission and appointment of the bishop of *Rome*, or that they were created bishops by the *favour of the apostolic see*. On the contrary, they all maintained, that they were the ambassadors and ministers of Jesus Christ, and that their authority was derived from above [*m*]. It must, however, be observed, that even in this century, several of those steps were laid, by which the bishops of *Rome* mounted afterwards to the summit of ecclesiastical power and despotism. These steps were partly laid by the imprudence of the emperors, partly by the dexterity of the Roman prelates themselves, and partly by the inconsiderate zeal and precipitate judgment of certain bishops [*n*]. The fourth *canon* of the council, held

[*m*] Those who desire an ampler account of this matter, may consult Petr. de Marca, *De concordia Sacerdotii et imperii.* Du Pin, *De antiqua Ecclesiæ disciplina;* and the very learned and judicious work of Blondel, *De la Primauté dans l'Eglise.*

☞ [*n*] The imprudence of the emperor, and the precipitation of the bishops, were singularly discovered in the following event, which favoured extremely the rise and the ambition of the Roman pontiff: About the year 372, Valentinian enacted a law, impowering the bishop of *Rome* to examine and judge other bishops, that religious disputes might not be decided by profane or secular judges. The bishops assembled in council at *Rome* in 378, not considering the fatal consequences that must arise, from this imprudent law,

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held at *Sardis* in the year 347, is considered, by the votaries of the Roman pontiff, as the principal step to his sovereignty in the church; but, in my opinion, it ought by no means to be looked upon in this point of view. For, not to insist upon the reasons that prove the authority of this council to be extremely dubious, nor upon those which have induced some to regard its laws as grossly corrupted, and others, to consider them as entirely fictitious and spurious [*o*], it will be sufficient to observe the impossibility of proving by the *canon* in question, that the bishops of *Sardis* were of opinion, that, in all cases, an appeal might be made to the bishop of *Rome*, in quality of supreme judge [*p*]. But supposing, for a moment, that this was their opinion, what would follow? Surely that pretext for assuming a supreme authority, must be very slender, which arises only from the decree of one obscure council.

VII.

both to themselves and to the church, declared their approbation of it in the strongest terms, and recommended the execution of it in an address to the emperor Gratian.—Some think, indeed, that this law impowered the Roman bishop to judge only the bishops within the limits of his jurisdiction, *i. e.* those of the suburbicarian provinces. Others are of opinion, that this power was given only for a time, and extended to those bishops alone, who were concerned in the present schism. This last notion seems probable: but still this privilege was an excellent instrument in the hands of sacerdotal ambition.

[*o*] See Mich. Geddes, *Diss. de canonibus Sardicensibus*, which is to be found in his *Micellaneous Tracts*, tom. ii. p. 415.

☞ [*p*] The fourth canon of the council of *Sardis*, supposing it genuine and authentic, related only to the particular case of a bishop's being deposed by the neighbouring prelates, and demanding a permission to make his defence. In that case, this canon prohibited the election of a successor to the deposed bishop, before that the bishop of Rome had examined the cause, and pronounced sentence thereupon.

The authority of the bishop of Constantinople is increased.

VII. Constantine the Great, by removing the seat of the empire to *Byzantium*, and building the city of *Constantinople*, raised up, in the bishop of this new metropolis, a formidable rival to the Roman pontiff, and a bulwark which menaced a vigorous opposition to his growing authority. For, as the emperor, in order to render *Constantinople* a second *Rome*, enriched it with all the rights and privileges, honours, and ornaments, of the ancient capital of the world; so its bishop, measuring his own dignity and rank by the magnificence of the new city, and its eminence, as the august residence of the emperor, assumed an equal degree of dignity with the bishop of *Rome*, and claimed a superiority over all the rest of the episcopal order. Nor did the emperors disapprove of these high pretensions, since they considered their own dignity as connected, in a certain measure, with that of the bishop of their imperial city. Accordingly, in a council held at Constantinople in the year 381, by the authority of Theodosius the Great, the bishop of that city was, during the absence of the bishop of *Alexandria*, and against the consent of the Roman prelate, placed, by the third *canon* of that council, in the first rank after the bishop of Rome, and consequently, above those of Alexandria and Antioch. Nectarius was the first bishop who enjoyed these new honours accumulated upon the see of Constantinople. His successor, the celebrated John Chrysostom, extended still further the privileges of that see, and submitted to its jurisdiction all *Thrace*, *Asia*, and *Pontus* [q]; nor were the succeeding bishops of

[q] See Petr. de Marca, *Diss. de Constantinop. Patriarchatus institutione*, which is subjoined to his book, *De concordia Sacerdotii et Imperii*. Mich. Lequien. *Oriens Christianus*, tom. i. p. 15. See also *an account of the government of the Christian church for the first six hundred years* by Dr. Parker, bishop of *Oxford*, p. 245.

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that imperial city destitute of a fervent zeal to augment their privileges, and to extend their dominion.

This sudden revolution in the ecclesiastical government, and this unexpected promotion of the bishop of *Byzantium* to a higher rank, to the detriment of other prelates of the first eminence in the church, were productive of the most disagreeable effects. For this promotion not only filled the bishops of *Alexandria* with the bitterest aversion to those of *Constantinople*, but also excited those deplorable contentions and disputes between these latter and the Roman pontiffs, which were carried on, for many ages, with such various success, and concluded, at length, in the entire separation of the Latin and Greek churches.

The vices of the clergy.

VIII. The additions made by the emperors and others to the wealth, honours, and advantages of the clergy, were followed with a proportionable augmentation of vices and luxury, particularly among those of that sacred order, who lived in great and opulent cities; and that many such additions were made to that order after the time of Constantine, is a matter that admits of no dispute. The bishops, on the one hand, contended with each other, in the most scandalous manner, concerning the extent of their respective jurisdictions; while, on the other, they trampled upon the rights of the people, violated the privileges of the inferior ministers, and imitated, in their conduct, and in their manner of living, the arrogance, voluptuousness, and luxury of magistrates and princes [*r*]. This pernicious example was soon followed

[*r*] See Sulpit. Sever. *Hist. Sacr.* lib. i. cap. xxiii. p. 74. lib. ii. cap. xxxiii. p. 248. cap. li. p. 292. *Dialog.* i. cap. 21. p. 426. Add to this the account given by Clarkson, in his *Discourse upon Liturgies*, p. 228. of the corrupt and profligate manners of the clergy, and particularly, of the unbounded ambition of the bishops, to enlarge the sphere of their influence and authority.

followed by the several ecclesiastical orders. The *presbyters*, in many places, assumed an equality with the bishops in point of rank and authority. We find also many complaints made, at this time, of the vanity and effeminacy of the *deacons*. Those more particularly of the presbyters and deacons, who filled the first stations of these orders, carried their pretensions to an extravagant length, and were offended at the notion of being placed upon an equal footing with their colleagues. For this reason, they not only assumed the titles of *Archpresbyters* and *Archdeacons*, but also claimed a degree of authority and power much superior to that which was vested in the other members of their respective orders.

The famous Greek writers.

IX. Several writers of great reputation lived in this century, and were shining ornaments to the countries to which they belonged. Among those that flourished in *Greece*, and in the eastern provinces, the following seem to deserve the first rank:

Eusebius Pamphilius, bishop of *Cæsarea* in *Palestine*, a man of immense reading, justly famous for his profound knowledge of ecclesiastical history, and singularly versed in other branches of literature, more especially in all the different parts of sacred erudition. These eminent talents and acquisitions were, however, accompanied with errors and defects, and he is said to have inclined towards the sentiments of those, who looked upon the three persons in the Godhead as different from each other in rank and dignity. Some have represented this learned prelate as a thorough Arian, but without foundation; if by an Arian be meant, one who embraces the doctrines taught by Arius, presbyter of *Alexandria* [*s*].

Peter

[*s*] No writer has accused Eusebius of Arianism, with more bitterness and erudition, than Le Clerc, in the second

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Peter of *Alexandria*, who is mentioned by Eusebius with the highest encomiums [*t*].

Athanasius, patriarch of *Alexandria*, celebrated on account of his learning and pious labours, and particularly famous for his warm and vigorous opposition to the Arians [*u*].

Basil, surnamed the Great, bishop of *Cæsarea*, who, in point of genius, controversial skill, and a rich and flowing eloquence, was surpassed by very few in this century [*w*].

Cyril, bishop of *Jerusalem*, who hast left some catechetical discourses, which he delivered in that city; he has been accused by many of intimate connections with the Semi-Arians [*x*].

John, surnamed Chrysostom, on account of his extraordinary eloquence, a man of a noble genius, governed successively the churches of *Antioch* and *Constantinople* [*y*], and left behind him several

of his *Epistolæ Eccles. et Criticæ*, which are subjoined to his *Ars Critica* and Natalis Alexander, *Hist. Eccles. Nov. T. Sæc.* iv. *Diss.* xvii. p. 205. All, however, that these writers prove is, that Eusebius maintained, that there was a certain disparity and subordination between the persons of the Godhead. And suppose this to have been his opinion, it will not follow from thence that he was an Arian, unless that word be taken in a very extensive and improper sense. Nothing is more common than the abusive application of this term to persons, who have held opinions quite opposite to those of Arius, though perhaps they may have erred in other respects.

[*t*] *Hist. Eccles.* lib. ix. cap. vi.

[*u*] Eusebius Renaudotus, in his *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*, p. 83. has collected all the accounts which the Oriental writers give of Athanasius, of whose works the learned and justly celebrated Benedictine Bernard Montfaucon, has given a splendid edition in three volumes in folio.

[*w*] The works of Basil were published at *Paris*, in three volumes folio, by Julian Garnier, a learned Benedictine.

[*x*] The later editions of the works of this prelate, are those published by Mr. Milles and by Augustus Touttee, a Benedictine monk.

[*y*] It must not be understood by this, that Chrysostom was bishop of both these churches; he was *preacher* at *Antioch*, (a func-

several monuments of his profound and extensive erudition; as also discourses [z] which he had preached with vast applause, and which are yet extant.

Epiphanius, bishop of *Salamis*, in the isle of *Cyprus*, who wrote a book against all the heresies that had sprung up in the church until his time. This work has little or no reputation, as it is full of inaccuracies and errors, and discovers almost in every page the levity and ignorance of its author [a].

Gregory Nazianzen and Gregory of *Nyssa*, who have obtained a very honourable place among the celebrated theological and polemic writers of this century, and not without foundation, as their works sufficiently testify [b]. Their reputation, indeed, would have been yet more confirmed, had they been less attached to the writings of Origen [c], and less infected with the false and vicious eloquence of the sophists.

Ephraim the Syrian, who has acquired an immortal name by the sanctity of his conversation and manners, and by the multitude of those excellent writings in which he has combated the sectaries, explained the sacred writings, and unfolded

(a function, indeed, which before him was always attached to the episcopal dignity), and afterwards patriarch of *Constantinople*.

[z] The best edition of the works of Chrysostom, is that published by Montfaucon, in eleven volumes folio.

[a] The works of Epiphanius have been translated into Latin, and published with notes, by the learned Petau. His life written by Gervas, appeared at *Paris* in 1738, in 4to.

[b] There are some good editions of these two writers, which we owe to the care and industry of two learned French editors of the last century. ☞ *Viz.* the Abbot Billy, who published the works of Gregory Nazienzen at *Paris*, in two volumes, folio, in the year 1609, with a Latin translation and learned notes; and Father Fronton du Duc, who published those of Gregory of *Nyssa* in 1605.

☞ [c] The charge of *Origenism* seems to have been brought by the ancient writers only against Gregory of *Nyssa*.

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folded the moral duties and obligations of Christians [*d*].

Besides the learned men now mentioned, there are several others, of whose writings but a small number have survived the ruins of time; such as Pamphilus, a martyr, and an intimate friend of Eusebius; Diodorus, bishop of *Tarsus;* Hosius, of *Cordova;* Didymus, of *Alexandria;* Eustathius, bishop of *Antioch;* Amphilochius, bishop of *Iconium;* Palladius, the writer of the *Lausiac History* [*e*]; Macarius, the elder and the younger; Apollinarius the elder; and some others, who are frequently made mention of on account of their erudition, and the remarkable events in which they were concerned.

The principal Latin writers.

X. The Latins also were not without writers of considerable note, the principal of whom we shall point out here:

Hilary, bishop of *Poictiers,* acquired a name by *twelve books concerning the Trinity,* which he wrote against the Arians, and several other productions. He was a man of penetration and genius; notwithstanding which, he has, for the most part, rather copied in his writings Tertullian and Origen, than given us the fruits of his own study and invention [*f*].

Lac-

[*d*] There is a large and accurate account of this excellent writer in the *Biblioth. Oriental. Vaticanæ* of Joseph Simon Asseman, tom. i. p. 24. Several works of Ephraim have been published in Greek, at *Oxford,* of which Gerard Vossius has given a Latin edition. An edition in Syriac, of the same works was published at *Rome,* not long ago, by Steph. Euod. Asseman.

☞ [*e*] This is the history of the *solitaries,* or *hermits,* which derived the name of *Lausiac* history from Lausus, governor of *Cappadocia,* at whose request it was composed, and to whom it was dedicated by Palladius.

[*f*] There is a very accurate and ample account of Hilary, in the *Histoire Litteraire de la France,* tom. i. Siecle iv. p. 139—193. The best edition we have of his works is that published by the French Benedictines.

Lactantius [*g*], the most eloquent of the Latin writers in this century, exposed the absurdity of the Pagan superstitions in his *Divine Institutions*, which are written with uncommon purity and elegance. He wrote also upon other subjects, but was much more successful in refuting the errors of others, than careful in observing and correcting his own [*h*].

Ambrose, prefect, and afterwards bishop of *Milan*, was not destitute of a certain degree of elegance both of genius and style; his sentiments of things were, by no means, absurd; but he did not escape the prevailing defect of that age, a want of solidity, accuracy, and order [*i*].

Jerome, a monk of *Palestine*, rendered, by his learned and zealous labours, such eminent services to the Christian cause, as will hand down his name with honour to the latest posterity. But this superior and illustrious merit was accompanied, and, in some measure, obscured, by very great defects. His complexion was excessively warm and choleric; his bitterness against those who differed from him, extremely keen; and his thirst of glory insatiable. He was so prone to censure, that several persons, whose lives were not only irreproachable, but even exemplary, became

[*g*] See a complete account of Lactantius, *Histoire Litteraire de la France,* tom. i. Siecle iv. p. 65.

[☞ [*h*] Lactantius considers Christ's mission as having no other end, than that of leading mankind to virtue by the most sublime precepts, and the most perfect example. The charge of Manicheism brought against this eminent writer, is refuted in the most evident and satisfactory manner by Dr. Lardner, in the seventh volume of his *Credibility of the Gospel History,* where the reader may find an ample and interesting account of his character and his writings. Among those who have been editors of the works of Lactantius, the most reputed are Bunemann, Heumann, Walchius, and Languet de Fresnoy.]

[*i*] The works of St. Ambrose have been published, by the Benedictines, in two volumes in folio.

came the objects of his unjust accusations. All this joined to his superstitious turn of mind, and the enthusiastic encomiums which he lavished upon a false and degenerate sort of piety which prevailed in his time, sunk his reputation greatly, and that even in the esteem of the candid and the wise. His writings are voluminous, but not all equally adapted to instruct and edify. His interpretations of the holy scriptures, and his *epistles*, are those of his productions which seem the most proper to be read with profit [*k*].

The fame of Augustin, bishop of *Hippo*, in *Africa*, filled the whole Christian world; and not without reason, as a variety of great and shining qualities were united in the character of that illustrious man. A sublime genius, an uninterrupted and zealous pursuit of truth, an indefatigable application, and invincible patience, a sincere piety, and a subtile and lively wit, conspired to establish his fame upon the most lasting foundations. It is, however, certain, that the accuracy and solidity of his judgment were, by no means, proportionable to the eminent talents now mentioned; and that upon many occasions, he was more guided by the violent impulse of a warm imagination, than by the cool dictates of reason and prudence. Hence that ambiguity which appears in his writings, and which has sometimes rendered the most attentive readers uncertain with respect to his real sentiments; and hence also the just complaints which many have made of the contradictions that are so frequent in his works, and of the levity and precipitation with which he set himself

[*k*] The defects of Jerome are exposed by Le Clerc, in his *Quæstiones Hieronymianæ*, published at *Amsterdam* in 12mo, in the year 1700. The Benedictine monks have given an edition of the works of this father in five volumes, which was republished, at *Verona*, by Vallarsius, with considerable additions.

himself to write upon a variety of subjects, before he had examined them with a sufficient degree of attention and diligence [*l*].

Optatus, bishop of *Milevi*, in *Numidia*, acquired no small degree of reputation, by a work which he wrote in *six books* against the *Schism* of the *Donatists* [*m*].

Paulinus, bishop of *Nola*, left behind him some poems and epistles, which are still extant; but are not remarkable either for their excellence or their meanness [*n*].

Rufinus, presbyter of *Aquileia*, is famous on account of his Latin translations of Origen, and other Greek writers, his commentaries on several passages of the holy scriptures, and his bitter contest with Jerome. He would have obtained a very honourable place among the Latin writers of this century, had it not been his misfortune to have had the powerful and foul-mouthed Jerome for his adversary [*o*].

As

[*l*] An accurate and splendid edition of the works of St. Augustin, has been given by the Benedictines, since that of the divines of *Louvain*. This elegant edition bears the title of *Antwerp*, where it was published, with some augmentations, by Le Clerc, under the fictitious name of Jo. Phereponus. The Jesuits, however, pretend to have found many defects in this edition.

[*m*] Since the edition of Optatus, published by Albaspinæus, another has appeared, which we owe to the care and industry of Du Pin, doctor of the *Sorbonne*.

[*n*] The best edition of Paulinus, is that which was published at *Paris*, in the year 1685, by Le Brun.

☞ [*o*] Rufinus and Jerome had lived for many years, in the most intimate and tender friendship, which ended in a violent rupture, on occasion of a translation which the former made of some of the works of Origen, particularly his *Book of principles*. For an account of Rufinus, see Rich. Simon, *Critique de la Bibliotheque des Auteurs Eccles. par.* M. Du Pin, tom. i. p. 124, &c. An ample account of the same writer is given by Justus Fontaninus, *Hist. Literar. Aquileiensis*, lib. v. p. 149.

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As to Philastrius, Damasus, Juvencus, and other writers of that obscure class, we refer the reader, for an account of them, to those authors whose principal design is to give an exact enumeration of the Christian writers. We shall add, nevertheless, to the list already given, Sulpitius Severus, by birth a Gaul, and the most eminent historical writer of this century [*p*]; as also Prudentius, a Spaniard, a poet of a happy and elegant genius.

CHAP. III.

Concerning the Doctrine of the Christian church in this century.

The state of religion.

I. THE fundamental principles of the Christian doctrine were preserved hitherto uncorrupted and entire in most churches, though, it must be confessed, that they were often explained and defended in a manner that discovered the greatest ignorance, and an utter confusion of ideas. The disputes carried on in the council of *Nice*, concerning the three persons in the Godhead, afford a remarkable example of this, particularly in the language and explanations of those who approved of the decisions of that council. So little light, precision, and order, reigned in their discourses, that they appeared to substitute three gods in the place of one.

Nor did the evil end here; for those vain fictions, which an attachment to the Platonic philosophy, and to popular opinions, had engaged the greatest

[*p*] See *Histoire Litteraire de la France*, tom. ii. p. 95; as also Hieron. a Prato, who has written, with great accuracy, the life of this historian.

greatest part of the Christian doctors to adopt before the time of Constantine, were now confirmed, enlarged, and embellished, in various ways. From hence arose that extravagant veneration for departed saints, and those absurd notions of a certain *fire* destined to purify separate souls, that now prevailed, and of which the public marks were every where to be seen. Hence also the celibacy of priests, the worship of images and relics, which, in process of time, almost utterly destroyed the Christian religion, or at least eclipsed its lustre, and corrupted its very essence in the most deplorable manner.

The increase of superstition.

II. An enormous train of different superstitions were gradually substituted in the place of true religion and genuine piety. This odious revolution was owing to a variety of causes. A ridiculous precipitation in receiving new opinions, a preposterous desire of imitating the Pagan rites, and of blending them with the Christian worship, and that idle propensity, which the generality of mankind have towards a gaudy and ostentatious religion, all contributed to establish the reign of superstition upon the ruins of Christianity. Accordingly, frequent pilgrimages were undertaken to *Palestine*, and to the tombs of the martyrs, as if there alone the sacred principles of virtue, and the certain hope of salvation were to be acquired [*q*]. The reins being once let loose to superstition, which knows no bounds, absurd notions, and idle ceremonies multiplied every day. Quantities of dust and earth brought from *Palestine*,

[*q*] See Gregor. Nysseni, *Orat. ad eos qui Hierosolymam adeunt*, tom. iii. opp. p. 568. Hieronymus, *Epist.* xiii. *ad Paulinum de instituto Monachi*, tom. i. p. 66. Jac. Godofred. *ad Codicem Theodosian.* tom. vi. p. 65. Petri Wesselingii. *Dissertat. de causis peregrinat. Hierosolymit. quam. Itinerario Burdigalensi præmisit*, inter *vetera Romanor. Itineraria*, p. 537.

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stine, and other places remarkable for their supposed sanctity, were handed about as the most powerful remedies against the violence of wicked spirits, and were sold and bought every where at enormous prices [*r*]. The public processions and supplications, by which the Pagans endeavoured to appease their gods, were now adopted into the Christian worship, and celebrated with great pomp and magnificence in several places. The virtues that had formerly been ascribed to the heathen temples, to their lustrations, to the statues of their gods and heroes, were now attributed to Christian churches, to water consecrated by certain forms of prayer, and to the images of holy men. And the same privileges, that the former enjoyed under the darkness of Paganism, were conferred upon the latter under the light of the gospel, or, rather, under that cloud of superstition that was obscuring its glory. It is true, that, as yet, images were not very common; nor were there any statues at all. But it is at the same time, as undoubtedly certain, as it is extravagant and monstrous, that the worship of the *martyrs* was modelled, by degrees, according to the religious services that were paid to the gods before the coming of Christ [*s*].

From these facts, which are but small specimens of the state of Christianity at this time, the discerning reader will easily perceive what detriment the church received from the peace and prosperity procured by Constantine, and from the imprudent methods employed to allure the different nations to embrace the gospel. The brevity we have proposed to observe in this history, prevents our entering into an ample detail of the dismal effects

[*r*] Augustinus, *De civitate Dei*, lib. xxii. cap. viii. sect. 6.

[*s*] For a full account of this matter, see Beausobre, *Hist. du Manicheism*, tom. ii. p. 642.

effects which arose from the progress and the baneful influence of superstition, now become universal.

Hence pious frauds.

III. This, indeed, among other unhappy effects, opened a wide door to the endless frauds of those odious impostors, who were so far destitute of all principle, as to enrich themselves by the ignorance and errors of the people. Rumours were artfully spread abroad of prodigies and miracles to be seen in certain places (a trick often practised by the heathen priests), and the design of these reports was to draw the populace, in multitudes, to these places, and to impose upon their credulity. These stratagems were generally successful; for the ignorance and slowness of apprehension of the people, to whom every thing that is new and singular appears miraculous, rendered them easily the dupes of this abominable artifice [*t*]. Nor was this all; certain tombs were falsely given out for the sepulchres of saints [*u*] and confessors; the list of the saints was augmented with fictitious names, and even robbers were converted into martyrs [*w*]. Some buried the bones of dead men in certain retired places, and then affirmed that they were divinely admonished, by a dream, that the body of some friend of God lay there [*x*]. Many, especially of the monks, travelled through the different provinces; and not only sold, with the most frontless impudence, their fictitious relics, but also deceived the eyes of the multitude with ludicrous combats with evil spirits or genii

[*t*] Henry Dodwell, *Dissert.* ii. *in Irenæum*, sect. 56. p. 196. Le Clerc, in his *Appendix Augustinian*, p. 492. 550. 575.

[*u*] *Concil. Carthag.* v. *Canon.* xiv. tom. i. *Conciliorum*, p. 988. edit. Harduini.

[*w*] Sulpitius Severus, *De vita. S. Martini*, cap. viii.

[*x*] Augustin. *Sermone* cccxviii. sect. i. tom. v. opp. p. 886. edit. Antwerp.

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genii [*y*]. A whole volume would be requisite to contain an enumeration of the various frauds which artful knaves practised, with success, to delude the ignorant, when true religion was almost entirely superseded by horrid superstition.

Versions of the holy scriptures.

IV. Many of the learned in this century, undertook translations of the holy scriptures, but few succeeded in this arduous enterprize. Among the many Latin versions of the sacred books, that of Jerome was distinguished by its undoubted superiority [*z*]. The same ingenious and indefatigable writer, whose skill in the languages was by no means inconsiderable, employed much pains upon the Greek version of the seventy interpreters, in order to give a more correct edition of it than had appeared before his time; and it is said, that Eusebius, Athanasius, and Euthalius, had embarked in an undertaking of the same nature [*a*]. The number of interpreters was very considerable, among whom Jerome, Hilary, Eusebius, Diodorus of *Tarsus*, Rufinus, Ephraim the Syrian, Theodore of *Heraclea*, Chrysostom, Athanasius, and Didymus, are generally esteemed worthy of the first rank. It is however certain, that, even of these first rate commentators, few have discovered a just discernment, or a sound judgment, in their laborious expositions of the sacred writings. Rufinus, Theodore of *Heraclea*, and Diodore of *Tarsus*, with some others, have, indeed, followed the natural signification of the words [*b*]; the rest, after the

[*y*] See Godofred *ad cod. Theod.* tom. iii. p. 172. Augustin. *De opere Monachor.* cap. xxviii. sect. 36. p. 364. tom. vi. opp. Hieronym. *Epist. ad Rusticum*, tom. i. opp. p. 45.

[*z*] See Jo. Franc. Buddei *Isagoge ad Theologiam*, tom. ii. p. 1532.

[*a*] Frickius, *De Canone, N. T.* p. 18.

[*b*] Simon, *Critique de la Bibliothèque des Auteurs Ecclesiast. par.* Du Pin. tom. i. p. 51. 90. 129. tom. iv. p. 335; as also

the example of Origen, are laborious in the search of far-fetched interpretations, and pervert the expressions of scripture, which they but half understand, by applying them, or rather straining them, to matters with which they have no connexion [*c*]. St. Augustin and Tychonius endeavoured to establish plain and wise rules for the interpretation of scripture, but their efforts were unsuccessful [*d*].

The method of explaining the doctrines of Christianity, followed at this time.

V. The doctrines of Christianity had not a better fate than the sacred scriptures from whence they are drawn. Origen was the great model whom the most eminent of the Christian doctors followed in their explications of the truths of the gospel, which were, of consequence explained, according to the rules of the Platonic philosophy, as it was corrected and modified by that learned father for the instruction of the youth. Those who desire a more ample and accurate account of this matter, may consult Gregory Nazianzen among the Greeks, and Augustin among the Latins, who were followed, for a long time, as the only patterns worthy of imitation, and who, next to Origen, may be considered as the parents and supporters of the *philosophical* or *scholastic theology*. They were both zealous Platonics, and holding, for certain, all the tenets of that Philosopher that were not totally repugnant to the truths of Christianity, they laid them down as fundamental principles, and drew from them a great variety of subtile conclusions, which neither Christ nor Plato ever thought of.

Platonics.

also *Hist. Critique des principaux Commentateurs du N. T.* cap. vi. p. 88, &c.

[*c*] See Gregor. Nazianz. *Carmen de Seipso,* in Tollius' *Insignia Itineris Italici,* p. 27, 57.

[*d*] This may be seen in the six books which Augustin wrote concerning the *Christian doctrine,* and in the *rules* of interpretation laid down by Tychonius, which are to be found in the *Biblioth. Patr. Maxim.* tom. vi. p. 48.

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Mystics.

This, however, was not the only sect that flourished at this time. That order of fanatics, who maintained that the knowledge of divine things was to be acquired, not by reasoning, but by still contemplation, and by turning the eye of the mind upon itself in an entire absence from all external and sensible objects, became now more numerous, and increased every day. This appears from many circumstances, particularly from the swarms of monks that almost overspread the Christian world; and also from the books of Dionysius, the pretended chief of the Mystics, which seem to have been forged in this century, under that venerable name, by some member of that fanatical tribe.

The didactic writers.

VI. Among the writers of this century, who published expositions of the Christian doctrine, the first place is due to Cyril of *Jerusalem*, justly celebrated for his *catechetical discourses*, which nothing but a partial blindness to the truth could have induced any to attribute to a more modern author [*c*]. Some have ranked Lactantius in the class of writers now under consideration, but without reason; since it is well known, that the labours of that eloquent author were rather employed in refuting the errors of idolatry, than in explaining the truths of the gospel. The *system of doctrine addressed to the clergy and laity*, and which, by many has been attributed to Athanasius, seems to be of a much later date. There are, however, many things in the works of Chrysostom, Athanasius, the Gregories, and others, by which we may be enabled to form a just idea of the manner in which the principal points of the Christian doctrine were explained by learned men in this century.

[*c*] See Jo. Fechtii *Comment. de origine missarum in honorem sanctorum*, p. 404.

tury. We may more particularly be assisted in this matter by the *twelve* books of Hilary, concerning the *Trinity;* the *Ancoratus*, of Epiphanius, in which the doctrine of scripture concerning Christ *and the Holy Ghost* is explained at large; the treatise of Pacian concerning *baptism*, addressed to the *catechumens;* and the two books of Chrysostom upon the same subject. We need not mention here the various works of Jerome and Augustin, in which appear the laborious and noble efforts of these great men to inspire into the minds of the people just notions of religion, and to detect and refute the errors of those who were enemies of the truth.

The state of Polemic divinity.

VII. The controversial writings that were levelled against those who were considered as heretics, were entirely destitute of that ancient simplicity, which is the natural and the beautiful garb of truth. That simplicity was now succeeded by logical subtilties, acute sophisms, sharp invectives, and other disingenuous arts, more worthy of the patrons of error, than of the defenders of the *wisdom that is from above.* We find, accordingly, many great and eminent men complaining of this abuse, and endeavouring in vain to oppose the muddy torrent of scurrility and dialectic that was overflowing the Christian schools [*f*]. I pass in silence those rhetorical figures and ornaments, by which many evaded the arguments of their adversaries, and artfully perplexed the true state of the case; that odious custom, also, of exciting the popular resentment against those who differed from them, that was observed by some, and that total want

[*f*] Methodius apud Epiphanium *Hæres.* lxiv. tom. i. opp. page 563. Gregor. Nazian. in many places, and others.

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of order and perspicuity that was chargeable upon almost all. Several writers of this age are so far from disowning these indecent qualities, that they seem, on the contrary, to glory in them. It must, indeed, be observed, that the adversaries of the truth used the same inglorious arms, though this does not in the least diminish the reproach that is on this account due to its friends.

Disingenuous methods of disputing used.

VIII. New methods of disputing were also added to those that were practised in former times: for the truth of doctrines was now proved by the number of martyrs that had professed them, by miracles, by the confession of *dæmons*, i. e. of persons possessed with evil spirits. The smallest degree of discernment will persuade any one how ambiguous this method of reasoning was; how dangerous to the truth, by furnishing innumerable occasions for the exercise of fraud and imposture. And, I fear, that the greatest part of those who used such arguments, however illustrious and respectable they may have been, will be found, upon examination, chargeable with the dangerous and criminal design of imposing upon their brethren. Ambrose, in his disputes with the Arians, produced men possessed with devils, who, upon the approach of the relics of Gervasius and Protasius, were obliged to acknowledge, with loud cries, that the doctrine of the council of *Nice*, concerning the three persons of the godhead, was true; and that of the Arians not only false, but also of most dangerous consequence. This testimony of the prince of darkness was regarded, by Ambrose, as an unexceptionable argument in favour of his hypothesis. The Arians, on the other hand, held this prodigy in the utmost derision, and maintained that Ambrose had suborned these infernal witnesses by a weighty

weighty bribe [*g*]; and I make no doubt, but many will be more disposed to believe the Arians, than to credit Ambrose, though he be enrolled in the order of the saints, and they stigmatized in the list of heretics [*h*].

The chief controversialists.

IX. There were, in this century, several controversialists of considerable note. For, besides Apollinaris, Gregory, Nazianzen, Cyril of *Alexandria*, and others who distinguished themselves in the lists against the emperor Julian; many others disputed with victorious force, and an happy success against the worshippers of the gods. Of this number were Lactantius, Athanasius, Julius Firmicus Maternus, Apollinaris the younger, whose excellent writings against Porphyry are unhappily lost; Augustin, in those books *of the city of God*, and in the 111 books against the Pagans, which have also perished; and above all, Eusebius of *Cæsaria* in his *Evangelical preparation*, and his *book against* Hierocles. Eusebius Emesenus, Diodore of *Tarsus*, and St. Chrysostom, whose treatise on that subject is still extant, employed their learned labours to bring over the Jews to the profession of Christianity. Ephraim of *Syria*, [*i*], James of *Nisibis*, Didymus and Audentius, attacked the whole body of heretics; as did also Epiphanius, in his voluminous work *concerning heresies*, intitled, *Panarium*, and Gre-

[*g*] Ambros. *Epist.* xxii. p. 878, &c. Paulinus *vita Ambrosii*, p. 81.

[*h*] See Le Clerc, *Appendix Augustiniana*, p. 375. Gregor. Nyss. *vita Gregorii Neocæsariensis*, tom. ii. opp. p. 977, 978. Sulpitius Severus, *Hist. Sacr.* lib. ii. cap. xxxviii. p. 261.

[*i*] See Jos. Sim. Asseman. *Biblioth. Oriental. Clement. Vatica.* tom. i. p. 118, 125. From the Extracts, which this learned compiler has given of the works of Ephraim, it appears, that he was more distinguished by his piety and genius, than by his skill in the managing of controversy.

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gory Nazianzen with more brevity in his *discourse concerning faith.* The books of Augustin and Philastrius, on the same subject, contain rather a list than a refutation of the several sects.

Moral writers.

X. If the growth and perfection of a science were to be estimated by the multitude of writers it produces, that of *morals* must have flourished greatly at this time, for the number of those was very considerable, who applied themselves to that excellent study. Among the eastern writers, James, bishop of *Nisibus* [*k*], and Ephraim, bishop of *Syria*, became eminent for their zeal and assiduity in inculcating the precepts of morality. The writings of Basil the Great, Gregory of *Nyssa*, Chrysostom, Ambrose, Augustin, and several others, upon moral subjects, are neither worthy of high encomiums, nor of entire contempt, as they contain a strange mixture of excellent reflections, and insipid details, concerning the duties of the Christian life. Among the productions of these writers, many give the preference to the 111 books of Ambrose, *concerning the duty of the ministers of the church*, which are written in the manner of Cicero, and are justly commended for the pious intention they discover, and the beautiful sentiments they contain, though there be many things in them worthy of reprehension. But Macarius, an Egyptian monk [*l*], undoubtedly deserves the first rank among the practical writers of this time, as his works displayed, some few things

[*k*] Jos. Sim. Assemann. in the work quoted in the preceding note, tom. i. p. 17. thinks, that the writings attributed to the bishop of *Nisibis* belong rather to the bishop of *Saruga*; he however corrects, in some measure, this notion in his *Addenda*, p. 558.

[*l*] See the *Acta Sanctorum*, tom. i. Januar. p. 1005.

things excepted [*m*], the brightest, and most lovely portraiture of sanctity and virtue.

The defects of these moral writers.

XI. It must, however, be observed, that almost all the writers of this class are defective in several respects. They have been entirely negligent of order in their compositions, and have taken no sort of care to treat with method and precision the subjects they undertook to explain. They seldom define their terms, and pour out their pious, but incoherent ideas in fortuitous combinations, just as they come uppermost. They, moreover, neglect deducing the duties of mankind from their true principles, and even sometimes derive them from doctrines and precepts that are either manifestly false, or, at least, whose nature and meaning are not determined with any degree of accuracy. And hence it is, that the greatest part of them are extremely defective, when they come to demonstrate the *obligations* of virtue, and the *incongruity* and *unfitness* of vice. These pretended demonstrations, instead of being deduced by proper conclusions from the reason of things and the divine laws, are nothing more than a collection of airy fancies, cold and insipid allegories, quaint and subtile conceits, which are more proper to afford amusement to the imagination, than light to the understanding, or conviction to the judgment.

The number of the mystics increased, and their doctrine propagated.

XII. But, however defective this method of inculcating the duties of morality may have been, it was much more tolerable than that which was followed by the amphibious disciples of Christ and Plato, those Alexandrian philosophers, of whom Ammonius Sacca was the chief. The

☞ [*m*] The things here excepted by Dr. Mosheim, are some superstitious tenets that are to be found in the writings of Macarius, and also certain opinions that seemed tainted with *Origenism*.

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double doctrine of morals which they invented, and which was compounded of two systems, the one surpassing the other in perfection, gained much ground in this century, to the great detriment of true religion. A circumstance every way proper to convince us of the growth and progress of this fanatical sect is, that those who in former times had inculcated a secret doctrine concerning divine things, totally different from that which was publicly propagated among the multitude, gave now the finishing touch to this doctrine, and formed it into a system. The famous Grecian fanatic, who gave himself out for Dionysius the Areopagite, disciple of St. Paul, and who, under the protection of this venerable name, gave laws and instructions to those that were desirous of raising their souls above all human things, in order to unite them to their great source by sublime contemplation, lived most probably in this century, though some place him before, others after the present period [*n*]. No sooner were the writings and instructions of this fanatic handed about among the Greeks and Syrians, and particularly among the *solitaries* and monks, than a gloomy cloud of religious darkness began to spread itself over the minds of many.

[*n*] Those who have written concerning this impostor, are enumerated by Jo. Franc. Buddeus, in his *Isagoge and Theologiam*, lib. ii. cap. iv. p. 175. See also Jo. Launii *Judicium de scriptis Dionysii*, tom. ii. opp. part I. p. 562. La Croze (in his *Histoire du Christianism d'Ethiope*, p. 10. endeavours to prove, that Synesius, an Egyptian bishop, and also the most celebrated philosopher of the fifth century, composed the writings attributed to Dionysius, in order to defend the doctrine of those who held, that Christ was only possessed of *one nature*. The arguments, however, of La Croze are weak. Nor are those more satisfactory which the learned Barratiere has employed, in a dissertation added to his book, *De successione. Rom. Episcop.* p. 286. to prove that Dionysius of *Alexandria* was the true author of the writings in question.

many. An incredible number of proselytes was added to that chimerical sect, who maintained, that communion with God was to be sought by mortifying sense, by withdrawing the mind from all external objects, by macerating the body with hunger and labour, and by a holy sort of indolence, which confined all the activity of the soul to a lazy contemplation of things spiritual and eternal.

Monkish societies.

XIII. The progress of this sect appears evidently from the prodigious number of solitary monks and sequestered virgins, which upon the return of tranquillity to the church, had over-run the whole Christian world with an amazing rapidity. Many of this order of men had, for a long time, been known among the Christians, and had led silent and solitary lives in the desarts of *Egypt;* but Antony was the first who formed them into a regular body, engaged them to live in society with each other, and prescribed to them fixed rules for the direction of their conduct [*o*]. These regulations which Antony had made in *Egypt*, were, the year following, introduced into *Palestine* and *Syria* by his disciple Hilarion. Almost about the same time, Aones, or Eugenius, with their companions, Gaddanas and Azyzus, instituted the monastic order in *Mesopotamia*, and the adjacent countries [*p*]; and their example was followed with such rapid success, that, in a short time, the whole east was filled with a lazy set of mortals, who, abandoning all human connections, advantages, pleasures, and concerns, wore out a languishing and

[*o*] For a full account of Antony, and the *discipline* established by him, see the *Acta Sanctorum,* tom. ii. Januar. ad. *d.* 17. p. 107.

[*p*] See Jos. Simon. Asseman. *Biblioth. Oriental. Clement. Vatican.* tom. iii. part II. p. 48.

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and miserable life, amidst the hardships of want, and various kinds of suffering, in order to arrive at a more close and rapturous communion with God and angels. The Christian church would never have been disgraced by this cruel and unsociable enthusiasm, nor would any have been subjected to those keen torments of mind and body to which it gave rise, had not many Christians been unwarily caught by the specious appearance, and the pompous sound of that maxim of the ancient philosophy, "That, in order to "the attainment of true felicity and communion "with God, it was necessary that the soul should "be separated from the body, even here below; "and that the body was to be macerated and mortified for this purpose."

The progress of monkery.

XIV. From the east this gloomy institution passed into the west, and first into *Italy*, and its neighbouring islands, though it is utterly uncertain who transplanted it thither [*q*]. St. Martin, the celebrated bishop of *Tours*, erected the first monasteries in *Gaul*, and recommended this religious solitude with such power and efficacy, both by his instructions and his example, that his funeral is said to have been attended by no less than two

[*q*] Most writers, following the opinion of Baronius, maintain that S. Athanasius brought the *monastic institution* from *Egypt* into *Italy*, in the year 340, and was the first who built a monastery at *Rome*. See Mabillonius, *Præf. ad Acta Sanctorum Ord. Bened.* tom. i. p. 9. But the learned Lewis Ant. Muratori combats this opinion, and pretends that the first monastery known in Europe, was erected at *Milan*. *Antiq. Italicar. medii ævi*, tom. i. p. 364.—Just. Fontaninus, in his *Historia Litter. Aquileiens.* p. 155. affirms that the first society of monks was formed at *Aquileia*. None of these writers produce unexceptionable evidence for their opinions. If we may give credit to the Ballerini (*Dissert.* ii. *ad Zenonem Veronensem*, p. 115.) the first convent of nuns was erected towards the end of this century, at *Verona*, by Zeno, bishop of that city.

two thousand monks [*r*]. From hence, the monastic discipline extended, gradually, its progress through the other provinces and countries of Europe.

It is, however, proper to observe, that there was a great difference in point of austerity, between the western and oriental monks; the former of whom could never be brought to bear the severe rules to which the latter voluntarily submitted. And, indeed, the reason of this difference may be partly derived from the nature of the respective climates in which they dwelt. The European countries abound not so much with delirious fanatics, and with persons of a morose and austere complexion, as those arid regions that lie towards the burning east; nor are our bodies capable of supporting that rigorous and abstemious method of living, which is familiar and easy to those who are placed under a glowing firmament, and breathe in a sultry and scorching atmosphere. It was, therefore, rather the name only than the thing itself, which was transported into the European countries [*s*], though this name was indeed,

[*r*] See Sulpit. Sever. *De vita Martini*, cap. x. p. 17. edit. Veron. where the method of living, used by the Martinian monks, is accurately described. See also *Histoire Litteraire de la France*, tom. i. part II. p. 42.

[*s*] This difference between the *discipline* of the eastern and western monks, and the cause of it, have been ingeniously remarked by Sulpitius Severus, *Dial.* i. *De Vita Martini*, p. 65. edit. Veron. where one of the interlocutors, in the dialogue, having mentioned the abstemious and wretched diet of the Egyptian monks, adds what follows: "Placetne tibi "prandium, fasiculus herbarum et panis dimidius viris "quinque?" To this question the Gaul answers, "Facis "tuo more, qui nullam occasionem omittis, quin nos (*i. e.* "the Gallic monks) edacitatis fatiges. Sed facis inhumanè, "qui nos Gallos homines cogis exemplo Angelorum vivere— "Sed contentus sit hoc prandio Cyrenensis ille, cui vel ne- "cessitas vel natura est esurire: nos, *quod tibi sæpe testatus* "*sum, Galli sumus.*" The same speaker, in the above-mentioned

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indeed, accompanied with a certain resemblance or distant imitation of the monastic life instituted by Antony and others in the east.

Different orders of monks.

XV. The monastic order, of which we have been taking a general view, was distributed into several classes. It was first divided into two distinct orders, of which the one received the denomination of Cœnobites, the other that of Eremites. The former lived together in a fixed habitation, and made up one large community under a chief, whom they called *father* or *abbot*, which signifies the same thing in the Egyptian language. The latter drew out a wretched life in perfect solitude, and were scattered here and there in caves, in desarts, in the hollow of rocks, sheltered from the wild beasts only by the cover of a miserable cottage, in which each one lived sequestered from the rest of his species.

Cœnobites and Eremites, or Hermits.

Anachorites.

The Anachorites were yet more excessive in the austerity of their manner of living than the Eremites. They frequented the wildest desarts without either tents or cottages; nourished themselves with the roots and herbs which grew spontaneously out of the uncultivated ground; wandered about without having any fixed abode, and reposing wherever the approach of night happened to find them: and all this, that they might *avoid the view and society of mortals* [*t*].

The

tioned dialogue, ch. viii. p. 69, 70. reproaches Jerome with having accused the monks of gluttony; and proceeds thus: "Sentio de orientalibus illum potius Monachis, quam "de occidentalibus disputasse. Nam edacitas in Græcis et "Orientalibus gula est, IN GALLIS NATURA." It appears, therefore, that, immediately after the introduction of the monastic order into Europe, the western differed greatly from the eastern monks in their manners and discipline, and were, in consequence of this accused by the latter of voraciousness and gluttony.

[*t*] See Sulpit. Sever. *Dial.* i. *De vita Martini*, cap. x. p. 80. edit. Veron.

The last order of monks that came now under consideration, were those wandering fanatics, or rather impostors, whom the Egyptians called Sarabaites, who, instead of procuring a subsistence by honest industry, travelled through various cities and provinces, and gained a maintenance by fictitious miracles, by selling relics to the multitude, and other frauds of a like nature. Sarabaites.

Many of the Cœnobites were chargeable with vicious and scandalous practices. This order, however, was not so universally corrupt as that of the Sarabaites, who were, for the most part, profligates of the most abandoned kind. As to the Eremites, they seem to have deserved no other reproach than that of a delirious and extravagant fanaticism [*u*]. All these different orders were hitherto composed of the *laity*, and were subject to the jurisdiction and the inspection of the bishops. But many of them were now adopted among the *Clergy*, and that even by the command of the emperors. Nay, The fame of monastic piety and sanctity became so universal, that bishops were frequently chosen out of that fanatical order [*w*].

XVI. If the enthusiastic frenzy of the monks exaggerated, in a manner pernicious to the interests of morality, the discipline that is obligatory upon Christians, the interests of virtue and true religion suffered yet more grievously by two monstrous errors which were almost universally adopted Two most pernicious maxims adopted in this century.

[*u*] Whoever is desirous of a fuller account of the vices of the monks in this century, may consult the above mentioned dialogue of Sulp. Sever. cap. viii. p. 69, 70. cap. xxi. p. 88. where he particularly chastises the arrogance and ambition of those of them who aspired to *clerical* honours. See also *Dial.* ii. cap. viii. p. 112. *Dial.* ii. cap. xv. p. 144, 145. *Consultat. Apollonii et Zachæi,* published by Dacherius *Spicileg.* tom. i. lib. iii. cap. iii. p. 35.

[*w*] See J. Godofred. *ad codicem Theodosianum.* tom. vi. part I. p. 76. 106. edit. Ritterianæ.

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adopted in this century, and became a source of immumerable calamities and mischiefs in the succeeding ages. The first of these maxims was, "that "it was an act of virtue to deceive and lie, when "by that means the interests of the church might "be promoted;" and the second equally horrible, though in another point of view, was, that "errors "in religion, when maintained and adhered to "after proper admonition, were punishable with "civil penalties and corporeal tortures." The former of these erroneous maxims was now of a long standing; it had been adopted for some ages past, and had produced an incredible number of ridiculous fables, fictitious prodigies, and pious frauds, to the unspeakable detriment of that glorious cause in which they were employed And it must be frankly confessed, that the greatest men, and most eminent saints of this century, were more or less tainted with the infection of this corrupt principle, as will appear evidently to such as look with an attentive eye into their writings and their actions. We would willingly except from this charge, Ambrose and Hilary, Augustin, Gregory Nazianzen, and Jerome; but truth, which is more respectable than these venerable fathers, obliges us to involve them in the general accusation. We may add also, that it was, probably, the contagion of this pernicious maxim, that engaged Sulpitius Severus, who is far from being, in the general, a puerile or credulous historian, to attribute so many miracles to St. Martin. The other maxim, relating to the justice and expediency of punishing error, was introduced with those serene and peaceful times which the accession of Constantine to the imperial throne procured to the church. It was from that period approved by many, enforced by several examples during the contests that arose with the Priscillianists and Donatists, confirmed and

and established by the authority of Augustin, and thus transmitted to the following ages.

The lives and morals of Christians.

XVII. When we cast an eye towards the lives and morals of Christians at this time, we find, as formerly, a mixture of good and evil; some eminent for their piety, others infamous for their crimes. The number, however, of immoral and unworthy Christians began so to increase, that the examples of real piety and virtue became extremely rare. When the terrors of persecution were totally dispelled; when the church, secured from the efforts of its enemies, enjoyed the sweets of prosperity and peace; when the most of the bishops exhibited to their flock the contagious examples of arrogance, luxury, effeminacy, animosity, and strife, with other vices too numerous to mention; when the inferior rulers and doctors of the church fell into a slothful and opprobrious negligence of the duties of their respective stations, and employed, in vain wranglings, and idle disputes, that zeal and attention that were due to the culture of piety and to the instruction of their people; and when (to complete the enormity of this horrid detail) multitudes were drawn into the profession of Christianity, not by the power of conviction and argument, but by the prospect of gain and the fear of punishment; then it was, indeed, no wonder that the church was contaminated with shoals of profligate Christians. and that the virtuous few were, in a manner, oppressed and overwhelmed with the superior numbers of the wicked and licentious. It is true, that the same rigorous penitence, which had taken place before Constantine the Great, continued now in full force againt flagrant transgressors; but when the reign of corruption becomes universal, the vigour of the laws yields to its sway, and a weak execution defeats the purposes of the most salutary discipline. Such was

now

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now unhappily the case; the age was sinking daily from one period of corruption to another; the great and the powerful sinned with impunity; and the obscure and the indigent felt alone the severity of the laws.

The Meletian controversy.

XVIII. Religious controversies among Christians were frequent in this century; and, as it often happens in the course of civil affairs, external peace gave occasion and leisure for the fomenting intestine troubles and dissensions. We shall mention some of the principal of these controversies, which produced violent and obstinate schisms; not so much, indeed, by their natural tendency, as by incidental occurrences.

In the beginning of this century, about the year 306, arose the famous Meletian controversy, so called from its author, and which, for a long time, divided the church. Peter, bishop of *Alexandria*, had deposed, from the episcopal office, Meletius, bishop of *Lycopolus*, in the *Upper Egypt*. The reasons that occasioned this violent act of authority, have not been sufficiently exposed.

The partisans of Peter allege, that Meletius had sacrificed to the gods, and charge him also with various crimes [*x*]; while others affirm, that his only failing was an excessive severity against the *lapsed* [*y*]. Be that as it will, Meletius treated the sentence of Peter with the utmost contempt, and did not only continue to perform all the duties of the episcopal function, but even assumed the right of consecrating presbyters; a privilege which, by the laws of *Egypt*, belonged only to the bishop of *Alexandria*. The venerable

[*x*] Athanasius, *Apologia secunda*, tom. i. opp. p. 777.

[*y*] Epiphanius, *Hæres.* lxviii. tom. i. opp. p. 716. see also Dion. Petavius, *Not. in Epiphanium*, tom. ii. p. 274. Sam. Basnagii *Exercitat. de rebus sacris contra Baronium.*

venerable gravity and eloquence of Meletius drew many to his party, and among others, a considerable number of monks adhered to his cause. The council of *Nice* made several ineffectual attempts to heal this breach; the Melitans, on the other hand, whose chief aim was to oppose the authority of the bishop of *Alexandria*, joined themselves to the Arians, who were his irreconcileable enemies. Hence it happened, that a dispute, which had for its first object the authority and jurisdiction of the bishop of *Alexandria*, degenerated gradually into a religious controversy. The Meletian party was yet subsisting in the fifth century [z].

The Eustathian troubles.

XIX. Some time after this, a certain person named Eustathius, was the occasion of great disorders and divisions in *Armenia*, *Pontus*, and the neighbouring countries; and was condemned and excommunicated, in consequence thereof, by the council of *Gangra*, which was held not long after that of *Nice*. Whether this was the same Eustathius, who was bishop of *Sebastia*, in *Armenia*, and the chief of the Semi-arians; or whether the ancient historians have confounded together two different persons of the same name, is a matter extremely difficult to determine [a]. However that be, the leader of the Eustathian sect does not seem so much chargeable with a corruption of any religious doctrine, as with having set up a fanatical form of sanctity; an extravagant system of practical discipline, destructive of the order and happiness of society. For he prohibited marriage, the use of wine and flesh, feasts of charity, and other things of that nature. He prescribed immediate divorce to

[z] Socrates, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. i. c. vi. p. 14. Theodoret. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. i. cap. viii. p. 548.

[a] See Sam. Basnag. *Annal. Polit. Eccles.* tom. ii. p. 40.

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those who were joined in wedlock, and is said to have granted to children and servants the liberty of violating the commands of their parents and masters upon pretexts of a religious nature [*b*].

Luciferian divisions.

XX. Lucifer, bishop of *Cagliari* in *Sardinia*, a man remarkable for his prudence, the austerity of his character, and the steadiness of his resolution and courage, was banished by the emperor Constantius, for having defended the Nicene doctrine, concerning the three persons in the Godhead. He broke the bonds of fraternal communion with Eusebius, bishop of *Verceil*, in the year 363, because the latter had consecrated Paulinus, bishop of *Antioch*; and he afterwards separated himself from the whole church, on account of the act of absolution it had passed in favour of those, who, under Constantius, had deserted to the Arians [*c*]. It is, at least, certain, that the small tribe that followed this prelate, under the title of Luciferians, avoided scrupulously and obstinately all commerce and fellowship, both with those bishops who had declared themselves in favour with the Arians, and with those also who consented to an absolution for such as returned from this desertion, and acknowledged their error; and thus of consequence they dissolved the bonds of their communion with the church in general [*d*]. The Luciferians are also

[*b*] Socrates, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. i. cap. xliii. p. 156. Sozomenus, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. iii. cap. xiv. p. 520. lib. iv. cap. xxiv. p. 581. Epiphan. *Hæres.* lxvi. p. 910. Philostorgius, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. iii. cap. xvi. p. 53. 59. Wolfg. Gundling. *Not. ad Concilium Gangrense*, p. 9.

[*c*] Rufin. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. i. cap. xxx. p. 174. Socrates, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. iii. cap. ix. p. 181, &c. See also Tillemont, *Memoires pour servir à l'Histoire de l'Eglise*, tom. vii. p. 521. edit. Paris.

[*d*] See in the *works* of Sirmond, tom. ii. p. 229, &c. *A book of Prayers*, addressed to Theodosius by Marcellinus and Faustinus, who were Luciferians.

also said to have entertained erroneous notions concerning the human soul, whose generation they considered as of a carnal nature, and maintained, that it was transfused from the parents into the children [*e*].

The Ærian controversy.

XXI. About this time Ærius, a presbyter monk, and Semi-arian, erected a new sect, and excited divisions throughout *Armenia*, *Pontus*, and *Cappadocia*, by propagating opinions different from those that were commonly received. One of his principal tenets was, that bishops were not distinguished from presbyters by any divine right; but that, according to the institution of the New Testament, their offices and authority were absolutely the same. How far Ærius pursued this opinion, through its natural consequences, is not certainly known; but we know, with the utmost certainty, that it was highly agreeable to many good Christians, who were no longer able to bear the tyranny and arrogance of the bishops of this century.

There were other things in which Ærius differed from the common notions of the time; he condemned prayers for the dead, stated fasts, the celebration of Easter, and other rites of that nature, in which the multitude erroneously imagine that the life and soul of religion consists [*f*]. His great purpose seems to have been that of reducing Christianity to its primitive simplicity; a purpose, indeed, laudable and noble when considered in itself; though the principles from whence it springs, and the means by which it is executed, are generally, in many respects, worthy

[*e*] Augustin. *De Hæres.* cap. lxxxi. with the observations of Lamb. Danmæus, p. 346.

[*f*] Epiphanius, *Hæres.* lxxv. p. 905. Augustin. *De Hæres.* cap. liii.

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of censure, and may have been so in the case of this reformer [*g*].

Jovinian.

XXII. The progress of superstition in this century, and the erroneous notions that prevailed concerning the true nature of religion, excited the zeal and the efforts of many to stem the torrent. But their labours only exposed them to infamy and reproach. The most eminent of these worthy opposers of the reigning superstitions was Jovinian, an Italian monk, who, towards the conclusion of this century, taught first at *Rome*, and afterwards at *Milan*, that all those who kept the vows they made to Christ at their baptism, and lived according to those rules of piety and virtue laid down in the gospel, had an equal title to

☞ [*g*] The desire of reducing religious worship to the greatest possible simplicity, however rational it may appear in itself, and, abstractedly considered, will be considerably moderated in such as bestow a moment's attention upon the imperfection and infirmities of human nature in its present state. Mankind, generally speaking, have too little elevation of mind to be much affected with those forms and methods of worship, in which there is nothing striking to the outward senses. The great difficulty here lies in determining the lengths, which it is prudent to go in the accommodation of religious ceremonies to human infirmity; and the grand point is, to fix a medium, in which a due regard may be shewn to the senses and imagination, without violating the dictates of right reason, or tarnishing the purity of true religion. It has been said, that the Romish church has gone too far in its condescension to infirmities of mankind. And this is what the ablest defenders of its motley worship have alleged in its behalf. But this observation is not just: the church of *Rome* has not so much accommodated itself to *human weakness*, as it has abused that weakness by taking occasion from it to establish an endless variety of ridiculous ceremonies, destructive of true religion, and only adapted to promote the riches and despotism of the clergy, and to keep the multitude still hoodwinked in their ignorance and superstition. How far a just antipathy to the church puppet-shews of the Papists has unjustly driven some Protestant churches into the opposite extreme, is a matter that I shall not now examine, though it certainly deserves a serious consideration.

to the rewards of futurity; and that, consequently, those who passed their days in unsociable celibacy, and severe mortifications and fastings, were in no respect more acceptable in the eye of God, than those who lived virtuously in the bonds of marriage, and nourished their bodies with moderation and temperance. These judicious opinions, which many began to adopt, were first condemned by the church of *Rome*, and afterwards, by Ambrose, in a council held at *Milan* in the year 390 [*h*]. The emperor Honorius seconded the authoritative proceedings of the bishops by the violence of the secular arm, answered the judicious reasonings of Jovinian by the terror of coercive and penal laws, and banished this pretended heretic to the island *Boa*. Jovinian published his opinions in a book, against which Jerome, in the following century, wrote a most bitter and abusive treatise, which is still extant [*i*].

Controversies relating to Origen.

XXIII. Among all the religious controversies that divided the church, the most celebrated, both for their importance and their duration, were those relating to Origen and his doctrine.

This illustrious man, though he had been, for a long time, charged with many errors, was held, by the most part of Christians, in the highest veneration, and his name was so sacred as to give weight to the cause in which it appeared. The Arians, who were sagacious in searching for succours on all sides to maintain their sect, affirmed that Origen had adopted their opinions. In this they were believed by some, who consequently included this great man in the hatred they entertained against the sect of the Arians. But several

 writers

[*h*] Hieronymus *Jovinianum*, tom. ii. opp. Augustin. *De Hæres.* cap. lxxxii. Ambros. *Epist.* vi, &c.

[*i*] *Codex Theodosianus*, tom. iii. p. 218. tom. vi. p. 193.

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writers of the first learning and note opposed this report, and endeavoured to vindicate the honour of their master from these injurious insinuations. The most eminent of these was Eusebius, bishop of *Cæsarea*, as appears by his learned work, intitled *An Apology for Origen*. It is extremely probable, that these clamours raised against the memory and reputation of a man, whom the whole Christian world beheld with respect, would have been soon hushed, had it not been for the rise of new commotions, which proceeded from another source, and of which we shall treat in the following section.

The progress of these controversies.

XXIV. The monks in general, and the Egyptian monks in particular, were enthusiastically devoted to Origen, and spared no labour to propagate his opinions in all places. Their zeal, however, met with opposition, nor could they persuade all Christians of the truth and soundness of the notions invented or adopted by that eminent writer. Hence arose a controversy concerning the reasons and foundations of *Origenism*, which was at first managed in a private manner, but, afterwards, by degrees, broke out into an open flame. Among the numerous partizans of Origen, was John, bishop of *Jerusalem*, which furnished Epiphanius and Jerome with a pretext to cast an odium upon this prelate, against whom they had been previously exasperated on other accounts. But the ingenious bishop conducted matters with such admirable dexterity, that, in defending himself, he vindicated, at the same time, the reputation of Origen, and drew to his party the whole monastic body; and also a prodigious number of those who were spectators of this interesting combat. This was but the beginning of the vehement contests concerning the doctrine of Origen, that were carried on both in the eastern and western provinces. These contests were

were particularly fomented in the west by Rufinus, a presbyter of *Aquileia*, who translated into Latin several books of Origen, and insinuated, with sufficient plainness, that he acquiesced in the sentiments they contained [*k*], which drew upon him the implacable rage of the learned and choleric Jerome. But these commotions seemed to cease in the west after the death of Rufinus, and the efforts which men of the first order made to check, both by their authority and by their writings, the progress of *Origenism* of those parts.

Controversy in the east concerning the writings of Origen.

XXV. The troubles which the writings and doctrines of Origen excited in the east were more grievous and lasting. Theophilus, bishop of *Alexandria*, irritated, for several reasons, against the Nitrian monks, represented them as infected with the contagion of *Origenism*, and ordered them to give up and abandon all the productions of Origen. The monks refused obedience to this command, and alleged in their defence two considerations; the one, that the passages in the writings of this holy and venerable man, which seemed to swerve from the truth, were inserted in them by ill-designing heretics; and the other, that a few things worthy of censure were not sufficient to justify the condemnation of the rest. Matters were but more exasperated by this refusal of submission to the order of Theophilus; for this violent prelate called a council at *Alexandria*, in the year 399, in which, having condemned the followers of Origen, he sent a band of soldiers to drive the monks from their residence on mount *Nitria*. The poor monks, scattered abroad thus by an armed force, fled first to *Jerusalem*, from whence they retired afterwards to *Scythopolis*; and finding that they could live here in security and

[*k*] See Just. Fontaninus *Historia Literar. Aquileiensis*, lib. iv. cap. iii. p. 177, &c.

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peace, determined, at length, to set sail for *Constantinople*, and there plead their cause in presence of the emperor [*l*]. The issue of these proceedings comes under the history of the following century.

It is, however, necessary to observe here, that we must not reduce to the same class all those who are called Origenists in the records of this century: For this ambiguous title is applied to persons who differed widely in their religious notions. Sometimes it merely signifies such friends of Origen, as acknowledged his writings to have been adulterated in many places, and who were far from patronizing the errors of which he was accused; in other places, this title is attributed to those who confess Origen to be the author of the doctrines which are imputed to him, and who resolutely support and defend his opinions; of which latter there was a considerable number among the monastic orders.

CHAP. IV.

Concerning the rites and ceremonies used in the church during this century.

A multitude of ceremonies introduced.

I. WHILE the Roman emperors were studious to promote the honour of Christianity, by the auspicious protection they afforded to the church, and their most zealous efforts to advance its interests, the inconsiderate, and ill-directed piety of the bishops cast a cloud over the beauty and simplicity of the gospel, by the prodigious

[*l*] See Peter. Daniel Huet, *Origenianorum*, lib. ii. cap. iv. p. 196. Louis Doucin, *Histoire de Origenisme*, livr. iii. p. 95. Hier. a Prato, *Diss.* vi. *in Sulpitium Severum de Monachis ob Origenis nomen ex Nitria totaque Ægypto pulsis*, p. 273. Veron. 1741. folio.

digious number of rites and ceremonies which they had invented to embellish it. And here we may apply that well-known saying of Augustin [*m*], that *the yoke under which the Jews formerly groaned, was more tolerable than that imposed upon many Christians in his time.* The rites and institutions, by which the Greeks, Romans, and other nations, had formerly testified their religious veneration for fictitious deities, were now adopted, with some slight alterations by Christian bishops, and employed in the service of the true God. We have already mentioned the reasons alleged for this imitation, so proper to disgust all who have a just sense of the native beauty of genuine Christianity. These fervent heralds of the gospel, whose zeal outrun their candour and ingenuity, imagined that the nations would receive Christianity with more facility, when they saw the rites and ceremonies to which they were accustomed, adopted in the church, and the same worship paid to Christ and his martyrs, which they had formerly offered to their idol deities. Hence it happened, that in these times, the religion of the Greeks and Romans differed very little in its external appearance, from that of the Christians. They had both a most pompous and splendid ritual. Gorgeous robes, mitres, tiaras, wax-tapers, crosiers [*n*], processions [*o*], lustrations,

[*m*] Augustin. *Epist.* cxix. *ad Januarium,* according to the ancient division.

☞ [*n*] The *Lituus,* which among the ancient Romans was the chief ensign of the augurs, and which derived its name from its resemblance of the *military trumpet,* became a mark of episcopal dignity. We call it the *crosier* or bishop's staff.

[*o*] The word *supplicationes,* which I have rendered by that of *processions,* signified among the pagans, those solemn and public acts of *gratitude* for national blessings, or *deprecation* of national calamities, which were expressed by the whole body of the people, by a religious approach to the temples of the gods, which by a decree of the senate, were open for all without distinction. See *Cic. Catil.* iii. 6. Liv. x. 23.

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lustrations, images, gold and silver vases, and many such circumstances of pageantry, were equally to be seen in the heathen temples, and the Christian churches.

Magnificent churches erected.

II. No sooner had Constantine the Great abolished the superstitions of his ancestors, than magnificent churches were every where erected for the Christians, which were richly adorned with pictures and images, and bore a striking resemblance of the Pagan temples, both in their outward and inward form [*p*]. Of these churches some were built over the tombs of martyrs, and were frequented only at stated times; while others were set apart for the ordinary assemblies of Christians in divine worship. The former were called Martyria, from the places where they were erected; and the latter Tituli [*q*]. Both of them were consecrated with great pomp, and with certain rites borrowed mostly from the ancient laws of the Roman pontiffs.

Origin of the right of patronage.

But our wonder will not cease here; it will rather be augmented when we learn, that, at this time, it was looked upon as an essential part of religion to have, in every country, a multitude of

[*p*] See Ezek. Spanheim, *Preuves sur les Cæsars de Julien.* p. 47. and particularly Le Brun's *Explication litteraire et historique des Ceremonies de la Messe*, tom. ii. p. 101. A description of these churches may be found in Eusebius, *De vita Constantini M.* lib. iii. cap. xxxv. and an exact plan of the interior structure of them is accurately engraved in bishop Beverege's *Adnotationes in Pandectas Canonum*, tom. ii. p. 70. and in Frederick Spanheim's *Institut. Hist. Eccles.* tom. i. opp. p. 860. It must also be observed, that certain parts of the Christian churches were formed after the model of the Jewish temples. See Camp. Vitringa, *Des synagoga vetere*, lib. iii. p. 466.

[*q*] Jo. Mabillon. *Musei Italici*, tom. ii. *in Comment. ad ordin. Roman.* p. xvi. ☞ The *Tituli* were the smaller churches, so called from this circumstance, that the presbyters, who officiated in them, were called by the names of the places where they were erected, *i. e.* received titles, which fixed them to those particular cures.

of churches; and here we must look for the true origin of what is called the *right of patronage*, which was introduced among Christians with no other view than to encourage the opulent to erect a great number of churches, by giving them the privilege of appointing the ministers that were to officiate in them [r]. This was a new instance of that servile imitation of the ancient superstitions which reigned at this time; for it was a very common notion among the people of old, that nations and provinces were happy and free from danger, in proportion to the number of fanes and temples, which they consecrated to the worship of gods and heroes, whose protection and succour could not fail, as it was thought, to be shed abundantly upon those who worshipped them with such zeal, and honoured them with so many marks of veneration and respect. The Christians unhappily contracted the same erroneous way of thinking. The greater the number of temples was, which they erected in honour of Christ, and his chosen friends, and followers, the more sanguine did their expectations grow of powerful succours from them, and of a peculiar interest in the divine protection. They were so weak as to imagine that God, Christ, and celestial intelligences, were delighted with those marks and testimonies of respect, which captivate the hearts of wretched mortals.

The form of public worship.

III. The Christian worship consisted in hymns, prayers, the reading of the scriptures, a discourse addressed to the people, and concluded with the celebration of the Lord's supper. To these were added various rites, more adapted to please the eyes, and strike the imagination, than to kindle in the heart the pure and sacred flame of genuine piety.

[r] Just. Henn. Böhmeri *Jus. Eccles. Protestant,* tom. iii. p. 466. *Bibliotheque Italique,* tom. v. p. 166.

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piety [*s*]. We are not however to think, that the same method of worship was uniformly followed in every Christian society, for this was far from being the case. Every bishop consulting his own private judgment, and taking into consideration the nature of the times, the genius of the country in which he lived, and the character and temper of those whom he was appointed to rule and instruct, formed such a plan of divine worship as he thought the wisest and the best. Hence that variety of *liturgies* which were in use, before the bishop of *Rome* had usurped the supreme power in religious matters, and persuaded the credulous and unthinking, that the model, both of doctrine and worship, was to be given by the mother-church, and to be followed implicitly throughout the Christian world.

Changes introduced into many parts of divine worship.

IV. It would be almost endless to enter into a minute detail of all the different parts of public worship, and to point out the disadvantageous changes they underwent. A few observations will be sufficient upon this head. The public prayers had now lost much of that solemn and majestic simplicity, that characterised them in the primitive times, and which were, at present, degenerating into a vain and swelling bombast. The Psalms of *David* were now received among the public hymns that were sung as a part of divine service [*t*]. The sermons, or public discourses addressed to the people, were composed according to the rules of human eloquence, and rather adapted

[*s*] For a full account of the form of public worship, or the *liturgies* of this century, the reader will do well to consult the twenty-second *catechetical discourse of* Cyril of *Jerusalem*, and the *apostolical constitutions*, which are falsely attributed to Clement of *Rome*. These writers are most learnedly illustrated and explained by Peter Le Brun, in his *Explication litterale et historique de la Messe*, tom. ii. p. 53.

[*t*] Beausobre, *Hist. du Manicheisme.* tom. ii. p. 614.

adapted to excite the stupid admiration of the populace, who delight in vain embellishments, than to enlighten the understanding, or to reform the heart. Nay, it would seem as if all possible means had been industriously used, to give an air of folly and extravagance to the Christian assemblies. For the people were permitted, nay, even exhorted by the preacher himself, to crown his talents with clapping of hands and loud acclamations of applause [*u*]; a recompence that was hitherto peculiar to the actors on the theatre, and the orators in the forum. How men, set apart by their profession to exhibit examples of the contempt of vain glory, and to demonstrate to others the vanity and emptiness of all temporal things, could indulge such a senseless and indecent ambition, is difficult to be conceived, though it is highly to be deplored.

Festivals or holidays.

V. The first day of the week, which was the ordinary and stated time for the public assemblies of Christians, was, in consequence of a peculiar law enacted by Constantine, observed with more solemnity than it had formerly been [*w*]. The festivals celebrated in most of the Christian churches were five in number, and were appointed in commemoration of the birth, the sufferings and death, the resurrection and the ascension of the divine Saviour; and also the effusion of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles and first heralds of the gospel on the day of Pentecost. Of these festivals, none were kept with so much solemnity and respect as the fourteen days that were appointed for the commemoration of Christ's resurrection [*x*].

The

[*u*] Franc. Bernh. Ferrarius, *De veterum acclamationibus et plausu*, p. 66.

[*w*] Jac. Godofred. *ad codicem Theodos.* tom. i. p. 135.

[*x*] Ibid. tom. i. p. 143.

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The eastern Christians celebrated the memory of Christ's birth and baptism in one festival, which was fixed on the sixth of January, and this day was by them called the *Epiphany*, as on it the immortal Saviour was manifested to the world [*y*]. On the other hand, the Christians of the west seem to have always celebrated the birth of our Lord on the 25th of December; for there appears to be very little certainty in the accounts of those, who allege, that the Roman pontiff, Julius I. removed the festival of Christ's birth from the 6th of January, to the 25th of December [*z*].

The unlucky success which some had in discovering the carcasses and remains of certain holy men, multiplied the *festivals* and *commemorations of the martyrs* in the most extravagant manner. The increase of these festivals would not have been offensive to the wise and the good, if Christians had employed the time they took up in promoting their spiritual interests, and in forming habits of sanctity and virtue. But the contrary happened. These days which were set apart for pious exercises, were squandered away in indolence, voluptuousness, and criminal pursuits, and were less consecrated to the service of God, than employed in the indulgence of sinful passions. It is well known, among other things, what opportunities of sinning were offered to the licentious, by what were called the vigils of Easter and Whitsuntide, or Pentecost.

Fasting.

VI. *Fasting* was considered, in this century, as the most effectual and powerful means of repelling the force, and disconcerting the stratagems of evil spirits,

[*y*] Beausobre, *Hist. du Manicheisme*, tom. ii. p. 693.

[*z*] See Jos. Sim. Assemann. *Biblioth. Orient. Clement. Vatican.* tom. ii. p. 168. Alph. des Vignoles *Diss dans la Bibliotheque Germanique*, tom. ii. p. 29.

spirits, and of appeasing the anger of an offended Deity. Hence we may easily understand what induced the rulers of the church to establish this custom by express laws, and to impose, as an indispensible duty, an act of humiliation; the observation of which had hitherto been left to every one's choice. The *Quadragesimal*, or *Lent-fast*, was held more sacred than all the rest, though it was not as yet confined to a fixed number of days [*a*]. We must, however, remark, that the *fasts* observed in this century, were very different from those that were solemnized in the preceding times. Formerly those who submitted themselves to the discipline of fasting abstained wholly from meat and drink; but now a mere abstinence from flesh and wine was, by many, judged sufficient for the purposes of fasting [*b*], and this latter opinion prevailed, from this time, and became universal among the Latins.

VII. *Baptismal* fonts were now erected in the porch of each church, for the more commodious administration of that initiating sacrament. *Baptism* was administered during the vigils of Easter and Whitsuntide, with lighted tapers, by the bishop, and the presbyters commissioned by him for that purpose. In cases, however, of urgent necessity, and in such only, a dispensation was granted for performing this sacred rite at other times than those now mentioned. In some places *salt* was employed, as a symbol of purity and wisdom, and was thrown, with this view, into the mouth of the person baptized; and a *double unction* was every where used in the celebration of this ordinance, one preceding its administration, and the other following it. The persons who were admitted into the church by baptism, were obliged

The administration of baptism.

[*a*] Jo. Dallæus, *De Jejuniis et Quadragesima*, lib. iv.
[*b*] See Barbeyrac, *De la Morale des Peres*, p. 250.

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obliged, after the celebration of that holy ordinance, to go clothed in white garments during the space of seven days.

Many other rites and ceremonies might be mentioned here; but as they neither acquired stability by their duration, nor received the sanction of universal approbation and consent, we shall pass them over in silence.

and of the Lord's supper.

VIII. The institution of *catechumens*, and the discipline through which they passed, suffered no variation in this century, but continued still upon its ancient footing. It appears farther, by innumerable testimonies, that the Lord's supper was administered, (in some places two or three times a-week, in others on Sunday only) to all those who were assembled together to worship God. It was also sometimes celebrated at the tombs of martyrs and at funerals, which custom, undoubtedly, gave rise to the *masses*, that were afterwards performed in honour of the saints, and for the benefit of the dead. In many places, the bread and wine were held up to view before their distribution, that they might be seen by the people, and contemplated with a certain religious respect; and hence, not long after, the *adoration of the symbols* was unquestionably derived. Neither *catechumens*, *penitents*, nor those who were supposed to be under the influence and impulse of evil spirits, were admitted to this holy ordinance; nor did the sacred orators in their public discourses ever dare to unfold its true and genuine nature with freedom and simplicity. The reason of thus concealing it from the knowledge and observation of many, was a very mean and shameful one, as we have already observed: many, indeed, offer a much more decent and satisfactory argument in favour of this custom, when they allege, that by these *mysterious* proceedings, the desire of the *catechumens* would naturally burn to penetrate, as soon

soon as was possible, the sublime secret, and that they would thereby be animated to prepare themselves with double diligence for receiving this privilege.

CHAP. V.

Concerning the divisions and heresies that troubled the church during this century.

I. THE sects which had sprung up in the preceding ages, transmitted their contagious principles to this century. Many of them remained yet, particularly in the east, and, notwithstanding their absurdity, continued to attract a certain number of followers. The Manichean faction surpassed the rest in its influence and progress. The very turpitude and enormity of its doctrines seemed to seduce many into its snares; and, what is still more surprising, men of genius and penetration were deluded by its enchantments, as the example of Augustin sufficiently testifies. It is true, the wisest and most learned writers of the times, and among others, Augustin, when he returned from his errors, endeavoured to oppose the growth of this spreading pestilence; nor were their efforts entirely unsuccessful. But the root of this horrible disease was deep; and neither the force of argument, nor the severity of the most rigorous laws, were sufficient to extirpate it thoroughly [c]. For some time, indeed,

The remains of the ancient sects.

[c] The severe laws enacted by the emperors against the Manicheans, are to be found in the *Theodosian Code*, vol. vi. part I. edit. Ritterian. In the year 372, Valentinian the elder prohibited their assemblies, and imposed heavy penalties on their doctors, p. 126. In 381, Theodosius the Great branded them with infamy, and deprived them of all the rights

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indeed it seemed to disappear, and many thought it utterly eradicated; but it gathered force secretly, and broke out afterwards with new violence. To avoid the severity of the laws, the Manicheans concealed themselves under a variety of names, which they adopted successively, and changed, in proportion, as they were discovered under them. Thus they assumed the names of Encratites, Apotactics, Saccophori, Hydroparastates, Solitaries, and several others, under which they lay concealed for a certain time, but could not, however, long escape the vigilance of their enemies [*d*].

The rise of the controversy with the Donatists.

II. The state had little danger to apprehend from a sect, which the force of severe laws and of penal restraints could not fail to undermine gradually, throughout the Roman empire. But a new, and much more formidable faction started up in *Africa*, which, though it arose from small beginnings, afflicted most grievously both church and state for more than a century. Its origin was as follows:

Mensurius, bishop of *Carthage*, in *Africa*, dying in the year 311, the greatest part of the clergy and people chose in his place, the archdeacon Cæcilianus, who, without waiting for the assembly of the Numidian bishops, was consecrated by those of Africa alone. This hasty proceeding was the occasion of much trouble. The Numidian bishops, who had always been present at the consecration of the bishops of Carthage, were highly offended at their being excluded from this solemn ceremony, and, assembling themselves at Carthage, called Cæcilianus before them, to give an account

rights and privileges of citizens, p. 133. Add to these, many edicts more dreadful, which may be seen in pages 137, 138, 170, of the above mentioned work.

[*d*] See the law of Theodosius, *Codex. Theod.* tom. vi. p. 134, 136, 137, 138.

count of his conduct. The flame, thus kindled, was greatly augmented by certain Carthaginian presbyters, who were competitors with Cæcilianus, particularly Botrus and Celesius. Lucilla, also, an opulent lady, who had been reprimanded by Cæcilianus for her superstitious practices, and had conceived against him a bitter enmity on that account, was active in exasperating the spirits of his adversaries, and distributed a large sum of money among the Numidians, to encourage them in their opposition to the new bishop. In consequence of all this, Cæcilianus, refusing to submit to the judgment of the Numidians, was condemned in a council, assembled by Secundus, bishop of *Tigisis*, consisting of seventy prelates, who, with the consent of a considerable part of the clergy and people, declared him unworthy of the episcopal dignity, and chose his deacon Majorinus for his successor. By this proceeding, the Carthaginian church was divided into two factions, and groaned under the contests of two rival bishops, Cæcilianus and Majorinus.

Cæcilianus condemned.

III. The Numidians alleged two important reasons to justify their sentence against Cæcilianus; as *first*, that Felix of *Aptungus*, the chief of the bishops, who assisted at his consecration, was a *traditor* (*i. e.* one of those who, during the persecution under Diocletian, had delivered the sacred writings and the pious books of the Christians to the magistrates in order to be burnt;) and that having thus apostatized from the service of Christ, it was not possible that he could impart the Holy Ghost to the new bishop. A *second* reason for their sentence against Cæcilianus was drawn from the harshness and even cruelty that he had discovered in his conduct, while he was a deacon, towards the Christian confessors and martyrs during the persecution above-mentioned, whom he

The reasons alleged for his condemnation.

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he abandoned, in the most merciless manner, to all the extremities of hunger and want, leaving them without food in their prisons, and hindering those who were willing to succour them, from bringing them relief. To these accusations they added the insolent contumacy of the new prelate, who refused to obey their summons, and to appear before them in council to justify his conduct.

There was none of the Numidians who opposed Cæcilianus with such bitterness and vehemence, as Donatus bishop of *Casæ nigræ*, and hence the whole faction was called after him, as most writers think; though some are of opinion, that they derived this name from another Donatus, whom the Donatists surnamed the Great [*e*]. This controversy, in a short time, spread far and wide, not only throughout *Numidia*, but even through all the provinces of *Africa*, which entered so zealously into this ecclesiastical war, that in most cities there were two bishops, one at the head of Cæcilianus' party, and the other acknowledged by the followers of Majorinus.

History of the Donatists.

IV. The Donatists having brought this controversy before Constantine the Great, that emperor, in the year 313, appointed Melchiades, bishop of *Rome*, to examine the matter, and named three bishops of *Gaul* to assist him in this inquiry. The result of this examination was favourable to Cæcilianus, who was entirely acquitted of the crimes

[*e*] In the faction of the Donatists, there were two eminent persons of the name of Donatus; the one was a Numidian, and bishop of *Casæ nigræ;* the other succeeded Majorinus, bishop of *Carthage*, as leader of the Donatists, and received from his sect, on account of his learning and virtue, the title of Donatus the Great. Hence it has been a question among the learned, from which of these the sect derived its name? The arguments that support the different sides of this trivial question are nearly of equal force; and why may we not decide it by supposing that the Donatists were so called from them both?

crimes laid to his charge; but the accusations that had been brought against Felix of *Aptungus*, by whom he was consecrated, were left out of the question. Hence it was, that the emperor, in the year 314, ordered the cause of Felix to be examined separately by Ælian, proconsul of *Africa*, by whose decision he was absolved. The Donatists, whose cause suffered necessarily by these proceedings, complained much of the judgment pronounced by Melchiades and Ælian. The small number of bishops, that had been appointed to examine their cause jointly with Melchiades, excited, in a particular manner, their reproaches, and even their contempt. They looked upon the decision of seventy venerable Numidian prelates, as infinitely more respectable than that pronounced by nineteen bishops (for such was the number assembled at [*f*] *Rome*,) who, besides the inferiority of their number, were not sufficiently acquainted with the African affairs to be competent judges in the present question. The indulgent emperor, willing to remove these specious complaints, ordered a second and a much more numerous assembly to meet at *Arles* in the year 314, composed of bishops from various provinces, from *Italy*, *Gaul*, *Germany*, and *Spain*. Here again the Donatists lost their cause, but renewed their efforts by appealing to the immediate judgment of the emperor, who condescended so far, as to admit their appeal; and, in consequence thereof, examined the whole affair himself in the year 316 at *Milan*, in presence of the contending parties.

☞ [*f*] The emperor, in his letter to Melchiades, named no more than three prelates, *viz.* Maternus, Rheticius, and Marinus, bishops of *Cologn*, *Autun*, and *Arles*, to sit with him as judges of this controversy; but afterwards he ordered seven more to be added to the number, and as many as could soon and conveniently assemble; so that they were at last nineteen in all.

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The issue of this third trial was not more favourable to the Donatists than that of the two preceding councils, whose decisions the emperor confirmed by the sentence he pronounced [*g*]. Hence this perverse sect loaded Constantine with the bitterest reproaches, and maliciously complained that Osius, bishop of *Cordua*, who was honoured with his friendship, and was intimately connected with Cæcilianus, had, by corrupt insinuations, engaged him to pronounce an unrighteous sentence. The emperor, animated with a just indignation at such odious proceedings, deprived the Donatists of their churches in *Africa*, and sent into banishment their seditious bishops. Nay, he carried his resentment so far as to put some of them to death, probably on account of the intolerable petulence and malignity they discovered, both in their writings and in their discourse. Hence arose violent commotions and tumults in *Africa*, as the sect of the Donatists was extremely powerful and numerous there. The emperor endeavoured by embassies and negociations, to allay these disturbances, but his efforts were without effect.

The origin of the Circumcelliones.

V. These unhappy commotions gave rise, no doubt, to a horrible confederacy of desperate ruffians, who passed under the name of Circumcelliones. This furious, fearless, and bloody set of men, composed of the rough and savage populace, who embraced the party of the Donatists, maintained their cause by the force of arms, and, over-

[*g*] The proofs of the supreme power of the emperors, in religious matters, appear so incontestable in this controversy, that it is amazing it should ever have been called in question. Certain it is, that, at this time, the notion of a supreme judge set over the church universal, by the appointment of Christ, never had entered into any one's head. The assemblies of the clergy at *Rome* and *Arles* are commonly called *councils:* but improperly, since, in reality, they were nothing more than meetings of judges, or *commissaries* appointed by the emperor.

over-running all *Africa*, filled that province with slaughter and rapine, and committed the most enormous acts of perfidy and cruelty against the followers of Cæcilianus. This outrageous multitude, whom no prospect of sufferings could terrify, and who, upon urgent occasions, faced death itself with the most audacious temerity, contributed to render the sect of the Donatists an object of the utmost abhorrence; though it cannot be made appear, from any records of undoubted authority, that the bishops of that faction, those, at least, who had any reputation for piety and virtue, either approved the proceedings, or stirred up the violence of this odious rabble. In the mean time, the flame of discord gathered strength daily, and seemed to portend the approaching horrors of a civil war; to prevent which, Constantine having tried, in vain, every other method of accommodation, abolished at last, by the advice of the governors of *Africa*, the laws that had been enacted against the Donatists, and allowed the people a full liberty of adhering to the party they liked the best.

They are defeated.

VI. After the death of Constantine the Great, his son Constans, to whom Africa was allotted in the division of the empire, sent Macarius and Paulus into that province, with a view to heal this deplorable schism, and to engage the Donatists to conclude a peace. Donatus, surnamed the Great, the principal bishop of that sect, opposed all methods of reconciliation with the utmost vehemence, and his example was followed by the other prelates of the party. The Circumcelliones also continued to support the cause of the Donatists by assassinations and massacres, executed with the most unrelenting fury. They were, however, stopt in their career, and were defeated by Macarius at the battle of *Bagnia*. Upon this, the affairs of the Donatists declined apace; and

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Macarius used no longer the soft voice of persuasion to engage them to an accommodation, but employed his authority for that purpose. A few submitted; the greatest part saved themselves by flight; numbers were sent into banishment, among whom was Donatus the Great; and many of them were punished with the utmost severity. During these troubles, which continued near thirteen years, several steps were taken against the Donatists, which the equitable and impartial will be at a loss to reconcile with the dictates of humanity and justice; nor, indeed, do the Catholics themselves deny the truth of this assertion [*h*], and hence the complaints which the Donatists made of the cruelty of their adversaries [*i*].

The state of the Donatists under the emperors Julian and Gratian.

VII. The emperor Julian, upon his accession to the throne in the year 362, permitted the exiled Donatists to return to their country, and restored them to the enjoyment of their former liberty. This step renewed the vigour of that expiring sect, who, on their return from banishment, brought over, in a short time, the greatest part of the province of *Africa*, to espouse their interests. Gratian, indeed, published several edicts against them, and in the year 377, deprived them of their churches, and prohibited all their assemblies

[*h*] The testimony of Optatus of *Milevi* is beyond exception in this matter; it is quoted from the third book of his treatise, *De Schismate Donatistarum*, sect. 1. and runs thus: "Ab Operaiis Unitatis (*i. e.* the emperor's ambassadors "Macarius and Paulus) multa quidem asperè gesta sunt.— "Fugerunt omnes Episcopi cum clericis suis, aliqui sunt mor- "tui: qui fortiores fuerunt, capti & longe relegati sunt." Optatus, through the whole of this work, endeavours to excuse the severities committed against the Donatists, of which he lays the principal fault upon that sect itself, confessing, however, that, in some instances, the proceedings against them were too rigorous to deserve approbation, or admit of an excuse.

[*i*] See *Collat. Carthag. diei tertiæ*, sect. 258. at the end of Optatus, p. 315.

assemblies public and private. But the fury of the Circumcelliones, who may be considered as the soldiery of the Donatists, and the apprehension of intestine tumults, prevented, no doubt, the vigorous execution of these laws. This appears from the number of churches which this people had in *Africa* towards the conclusion of this century, and which were served by no less than four hundred bishops. Two things, however, diminished considerably the power and lustre of this flourishing sect, and made it decline apace about the end of this century; the one was, a violent division that arose among them, on account of a person named Maximin; and this division, so proper to weaken the common cause, was the most effectual instrument the Catholics could use to combat the Donatists. But a second circumstance which precipitated their decline, was the zealous and fervent opposition of Augustin, first presbyter, and afterwards bishop of *Hippo*. This learned and ingenious prelate attacked the Donatists in every way. In his writings, in his public discourses, and in his private conversation, he exposed the dangerous and seditious principles of this sect in the strongest manner; and as he was of a warm and active spirit, he animated against them, not only the province of *Africa*, but also the whole Christian world, and the imperial court.

VIII. The doctrine of the Donatists was conformable to that of the church, as even their adversaries confess; nor were their lives less exemplary than those of other Christian societies, if we except the enormous conduct of the Circumcelliones, which the greatest part of the sect, regarded with the utmost detestation and abhorrence. The crime, therefore, of the Donatists lay properly in the following things; in their declaring the church of *Africa*, which adhered to Cæcilianus, fallen from the dignity and privileges

The principal crime of the Donatists.

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leges of a true church, and deprived of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, on account of the offences with which the new bishop, and Felix of *Aptungus*, who had consecrated him, were charged; in their pronouncing all the churches, who held communion with that of *Africa*, corrupt and polluted; in maintaining, that the sanctity of their bishops gave their community alone a full right to be considered as the true, the pure, and holy church; and in their avoiding all communication with other churches, from an apprehension of contracting their impurity and corruption. This erroneous principle was the source of that most shocking uncharitableness and presumption that appeared in their conduct to other churches. Hence they pronounced the sacred rites and institutions void of all virtue and efficacy among those Christians who were not precisely of their sentiments, and not only re-baptized those who came over to their party from other churches, but even with respect to those who had been ordained ministers of the gospel, they observed the severe custom, either of depriving them of their office, or obliging them to be ordained a second time. This schismatic pestilence was almost wholly confined to *Africa;* for the few pitiful assemblies, which the Donatists had formed in *Spain* and *Italy*, had neither stability nor duration [*k*].

IX.

[*k*] A more ample account of the Donatists will be found in the following writers: Henr. Valesius, *Dissert. de Schismate Donatistarum.* This dissertation Valesius subjoined to his edition of the ecclesiastical history of Eusebius. Thom. Ittigius' *History of Donatism,* which is published in the Appendix to his book concerning the *Heresies of the apostolic age.* Herm. Witsius, *Miscellan. Sacror.* tom. i. lib. iv. p. 742. Henr. Noris, *Hist. Donatian,* augmented by the Balerini, opp. tom. iv. p. xlv. Long's *History of the Donatists,* London, 1677, 8vo. These are the sources from whence we have drawn the accounts that we have given of this troublesome sect.

The doctrine of this century concerning the Trinity.

IX. The faction of the Donatists was not the only one that troubled the church during this century. Soon after its commencement, even in the year 317, a new contention arose in *Egypt*, upon a subject of much higher importance, and with consequences of a yet more pernicious nature. The subject of this fatal controversy, which kindled such deplorable divisions throughout the Christian world, was the doctrine of *three persons in the Godhead;* a doctrine, which, in the three preceding centuries, had happily escaped the vain curiosity of human researches, and been left undefined and undetermined by any particular set of ideas. The church indeed, had frequently decided against the Sabellians and others, that there was a real difference between the *Father* and the *Son*, and that the *Holy Ghost* was distinct from them both: or, as we commonly speak, that three distinct persons exist in the Deity; but the mutual relation of these persons to each other, and the nature of that distinction that subsists between them, are matters that hitherto were neither disputed nor explained, and with respect to which the church had, consequently, observed a profound silence. Nothing was dictated to the faith of Christians in this matter, nor were there any modes of expression prescribed as requisite to be used in speaking of this mystery. Hence it happened, that the Christian doctors entertained different sentiments upon this subject without giving the least offence, and discoursed variously, concerning the distinctions between *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost;* each one following his respective opinion with the utmost liberty. In *Egypt*, and the adjacent countries, the greatest part embraced in this, as well as in other matters, the opinion of Origen, who held that the *Son* was *in God*, that which *reason* is *in man;* and that the *Holy Ghost* was nothing more than the *divine energy*, or active force.

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force. This notion is attended with many difficulties; and if it is not proposed with the utmost caution, tends, in a particular manner, to remove all real distinction between the persons in the Godhead, or, in other words, leads directly to Sabellianism.

The rise of Arianism.

X. In an assembly of the presbyters of *Alexandria*, the bishop of that city, whose name was Alexander, expressed his sentiments on this head with a high degree of freedom and confidence; and maintained, among other things, that the Son was not only of the same eminence and dignity, but also of the same essence, with the Father [*l*]. This assertion was opposed by Arius, one of the presbyters, a man of a subtile turn, and remarkable for his eloquence. Whether his zeal for his own opinions, or personal resentment against his bishop, was the motive that influenced him, is not very certain. Be that as it will, he first treated as false, the assertion of Alexander, on account of its affinity to the Sabellian errors, which had been condemned by the church; and then, running himself into the opposite extreme, he maintained, that the *Son* was totally and *essentially* distinct from the *Father;* that he was the *first* and *noblest* of those beings, whom God the *Father* had created out of nothing, the instrument by whose subordinate operation the Almighty Father formed the universe, and therefore inferior to the Father, both in *nature* and in *dignity*. His opinions concerning the *Holy Ghost* are not so well known. It is however certain, that his notion concerning the *Son of God* was accompanied and connected with other sentiments, that were very different from those commonly received among Christians, though none of the ancient writers have given us a com-

[*l*] See Socrates, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. i. cap. v. Theodoret. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. i. cap. ii.

a complete and coherent system of those religious tenets which were really held by Arius and his followers [*m*].

The progress of the Arian sect.

XI. The opinions of Arius were no sooner divulged, than they found in *Egypt*, and the neighbouring provinces, a multitude of abettors, and among these, many who were distinguished as much by the superiority of their learning and genius, as by the eminence of their rank and station in the world. Alexander, on the other hand, in two councils assembled at *Alexandria*, accused Arius of impiety, and caused him to be expelled from the communion of the church. Arius received this severe and ignominious shock with great firmness and constancy of mind; retired into *Palestine;* wrote from thence several letters to the most eminent men of those times, in which he endeavoured to demonstrate the truth of his opinions, and that with such surprising success, that vast numbers were drawn over to his party; and among these Eusebius, bishop of *Nicomedia*,

[*m*] For an account of the Arian controversy, the curious reader must consult the *Life of Constantine*, by Eusebius, the various libels of Athanasius, which are to be found in the first volume of his works; the *Ecclesiastical Histories of* Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret, the sixty-ninth *Heresy* of Epiphanius, and other writers of this and the following age. But among all these, there is none to whom the merit of impartiality can be attributed with justice; so that the Arian history stands yet in need of a pen guided by integrity and candour, and unbiassed by affection or hatred. Both sides have deserved reproach upon this head; and those who have hitherto written the history of the Arian controversy have only espied the faults of one side; *e. g.* it is a common opinion, that Arius was too much attached to the opinions of Plato and Origen (see *Petav. Dogm. Theol.* tom. ii. lib. i. cap. viii.); but this common opinion is a vulgar error. Origen and Plato entertained notions entirely different from those of Arius; whereas Alexander, his antagonist, undoubtedly followed the manner of Origen, in explaining the doctrine of the *three persons*. See Cudworth's *Intellectual System of the Universe*.

comedia, a man distinguished in the church by his influence and authority. The emperor Constantine, looking upon the subject of this controversy as a matter of small importance, and as little connected with the fundamental and essential doctrines of religion, contented himself at first with addressing a letter to the contending parties, in which he admonished them to put an end to their disputes. But when the prince saw that his admonitions were without effect, and that the troubles and commotions, which the passions of men too often mingle with religious disputes, were spreading and increasing daily throughout the empire, he assembled at length, in the year 325, the famous council of *Nice* in *Bithynia*, wherein the deputies of the church universal were summoned to put an end to this controversy. In this general council, after many keen debates, and violent efforts of the two parties, the doctrine of Arius was condemned; Christ declared *consubstantial* [*n*], or of the same essence with the Father; the vanquished presbyter banished among the Illyrians, and his followers compelled to give their assent to the creed [*o*], or confession of faith, which was composed by this council.

The council Nice.

XII. The council assembled by Constantine at *Nice*, is one of the most famous and interesting events that are presented to us in ecclesiastical history; and yet, what is more surprising, there is no part of the history of the church that has been unfolded with such negligence, or rather passed over with such rapidity [*p*]. The ancient writers are

[*n*] Ὁμοούσιος.

[*o*] John Christ. Suicer has illustrated this famous creed from several important and ancient records in a very learned book published in 4to at *Utrecht*, in the year 1718.

[*p*] See Ittigii *Historia Concilii Nicæni* which was published after his death. Le Clerc, *Bibliotheque Histor. et Universelle*, tom. x. p. 421. tom. xxii. p. 291. Beausobre, *Histoire de Manichée, et de Manicheisme*, tom. i. p. 520. The accounts

are neither agreed concerning the time nor place in which it was assembled, the number of those who sat in council, nor the bishop who presided in it. No authentic acts of its famous sentence have been committed to writing, or, at least, none have been transmitted to our times [*q*].

The eastern Christians differ from all others both concerning the number and the nature of the laws that were enacted in this celebrated council. The latter mention only twenty *canons;* but in the estimate of the former, they amount to a much greater number [*r*]. It appears, however, by those laws, which all parties have admitted as genuine, and also from other authentic records, not only that Arius was condemned in this council, but that some other points were determined, and certain measures agreed upon, to calm the religious tumults that had so long troubled the church. The controversy concerning the time of celebrating Easter was terminated [*s*]; the troubles which Novatian had excited, by opposing the re-admission of the *lapsed* to the communion of the church, were composed; the Meletian schism was

accounts, which the Oriental writers have given of this council, have been collected by Euseb. Renaudot, in his *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria,* p. 69.

[*q*] See the *Annotations of* Valesius, *upon the Ecclesiastical History of* Eusebius, p. 223. Jos. Sim. Asseman. *Bibl. Orient. Clement. Vatican.* tom. i. p. 195. The history of this council was written by Maruthus, a Syrian, but is long since lost.

[*r*] Th. Ittigius *Supplem. opp. Clement. Alex.* p. 191. Jos. Sim. Asseman. *Biblioth. Orient. Clement. Vatic.* tom. i. p. 22. 195. Euseb. Renaudot. *Histor. Patriarch. Alexandrinor.* p. 71.

☞ [*s*] The decision, with respect to Easter, was in favour of the custom of the western churches; and accordingly all churches were ordered to celebrate that festival on the Sunday which immediately followed the 14th of the first moon that happened after the vernal equinox.

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was condemned [*t*]; the jurisdiction of the greater bishops precisely defined and determined [*u*]; with several other matters of a like nature. But while these good prelates were employing all their zeal and attention to correct the mistakes and errors of others, they were upon the point of falling into a very capital one themselves. For they had almost come to a resolution of imposing upon the clergy the yoke of perpetual celibacy, when Paphnutius put a stop to their proceedings, and warded off that unnatural law [*w*].

The history of Arianism after the council of Nice.

XIII. But, notwithstanding all these determinations, the commotions excited by this controversy remained yet in the minds of many, and the spirit of dissension and controversy triumphed both over the decrees of the council and the authority of the emperor,

☞ [*t*] Meletius, bishop of *Lycopolis* in *Egypt*, was accused and convicted of having offered *incense to idols*; and, in consequence thereof was deposed by Peter, bishop of *Alexandria*, whose jurisdiction extended throughout all *Egypt*. Meletius, upon this, became the head of a schism in the church by assuming to himself the power of ordination, which was vested in the bishop of *Alexandria*, and exercised by him in all the *Egyptian churches*. Epiphanius attributes the dissensions between Meletius and Peter to another cause (*Hær.* 68.): he alleges, that the vigorous proceedings of Peter against Meletius, were occasioned by the latter's refusing to re-admit into the church those who had fallen from the faith during Diocletian's persecutions, before their penitential trial was entirely finished. The former opinion is maintained by Socrates and Theodoret, whose authority is certainly more respectable than that of Epiphanius.

☞ [*u*] The confusion that Meletius introduced, by presuming (as was observed in the preceding note) to violate the jurisdiction of *Peter*, the metropolitan of *Alexandria*, by conferring *ordination* in a province where he alone had a right to ordain, was rectified by the council of *Nice*, which determined, that the metropolitan bishops, in their respective provinces, should have the same power and authority that the bishops of *Rome* exercised over the Suburbicarian churches and countries.

[*w*] Socrates *Hist. Eccles.* lib. i. cap. viii. compared with Franc. Balduinus, *in Constant. Magn.* and George Calixtus, *De conjugio Clericorum*, p. 170.

emperor. For those who, in the main, were far from being attached to the party of Arius, found many things reprehensible, both in the decrees of the council, and in the forms of expression which it employed to explain the controverted points; while the Arians, on the other hand, left no means untried to heal their wound, and to recover their place and their credit in the church. And their efforts were crowned with the desired success: For a few years after the council of *Nice*, a certain Arian priest, who had been recommended to the emperor, in the dying words of his sister Constantia, found means to persuade Constantine the Great, that the condemnation of Arius was utterly unjust, and was rather owing to the malice of his enemies, than to their zeal for the truth. In consequence of this, the emperor recalled him from banishment in the year 330 [*x*],

☞ [*x*] The precise time in which Arius was recalled from banishment, has not been fixed with such perfect certainty as to prevent a diversity of sentiments on that head. The *Annotations* of the learned Valesius (or Valois) upon Sozomen's *History*, p. 10. and 11. will cast some light upon this matter, and make it probable, that Dr. Mosheim has placed the recal of Arius too late, at least by two years. Valesius has proved, from the authority of Philostorgius, and from other most respectable monuments and records, that Eusebius of *Nicomedia*, and Theognis, who were banished by the emperor about three months after the council of *Nice*, *i. e.* in the year 325, were recalled in the year 328. Now, in the *writing* by which they obtained their return, they pleaded the restoration of Arius, as an argument for theirs, which proves that he was recalled before the year 330. The same Valesius proves, that Arius, the first head of the Arian sect, was dead before the council of *Tyre*, which was transferred to *Jerusalem*; and that the letters which Constantine addressed to that council in favour of Arius and his followers, were in behalf of a second chief of that name, who put himself at the head of the Arians, and who, in conjunction with Euzoius, presented to Constantine such a confession of their faith, as made him imagine their doctrine to be orthodox, and procured their reconciliation with the church at the council of *Jerusalem*. See *Annot. Vales. ad Hist. Socrat.* lib. i. cap. xxxiii. p. 16.

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repealed the laws that had been enacted against him, and permitted his chief protector Eusebius of *Nicomedia*, and his vindictive faction, to vex and oppress the partisans of the *Nicene* council in various ways. Athanasius, bishop of *Alexandria*, was one of those who suffered most from the violent measures of the Arian party. Invincibly firm in his purpose, and deaf to the most powerful solicitations and entreaties, he obstinately refused to restore Arius to his former rank and office. On this account he was deposed, by the council held at *Tyre*, in the year 335, and was afterwards banished into *Gaul*, while Arius and his followers were, with great solemnity, reinstated in their privileges, and received into the communion of the church. The people of *Alexandria*, unmoved by these proceedings in favour of Arius, persisted to refuse him a place among their presbyters; upon which the emperor invited him to *Constantinople* in the year 336, and ordered Alexander, the bishop of that city, to admit him to his communion. But before this order could be put in execution, Arius died at *Constantinople* in a very dismal manner [*y*], and the emperor

☞ [*y*] The dismal manner in which Arius is said to have expired, by his entrails falling out as he was discharging one of the natural functions, is a fact that has been called in question by some modern writers, though without foundation, since it is confirmed by the unexceptionable testimonies of Socrates, Sozomen, Athanasius, and others. The causes of this tragical death have, however, furnished much matter of dispute. The ancient writers, who considered this event as a judgment of heaven, miraculously drawn down, by the prayers of the just, to punish the impiety of Arius, will find little credit in our times, among such as have studied with attention and impartiality the history of Arianism. After having considered this matter with the utmost care, it appears to me extremely probable, that this unhappy man was a victim to the resentment of his enemies, and was destroyed by poison, or some such violent method. A blind and fanatical zeal for certain systems of faith, has in all ages produced such horrible acts of cruelty and injustice.

peror Constantine survived him but a short time. CENT. IV. PART II.

XIV. After the death of Constantine the Great, one of his sons, Constantius, who, in the division of the empire, became ruler of the east, was warmly attached to the Arian party, whose principles were also zealously adopted by the empress, and, indeed, by the whole court. On the other hand, Constantine and Constans, emperors of the west, maintained the decrees of the council of *Nice* throughout all the provinces where their jurisdiction extended. Hence arose endless animosities and seditions, treacherous plots, and open acts of injustice and violence between the two contending parties. Council was assembled against council, and their jarring and contradictory decrees spread perplexity and confusion throughout the Christian world. Under the sons of Constantine.

In the year 350, Constans was assassinated; and about two years after this, a great part of the western empire, particularly *Rome* and *Italy*, fell into the hands of his brother Constantius. This change was extremely unfavourable to those who adhered to the decrees of the council of *Nice*. The emperor's attachment to the Arians animated him against their adversaries, whom he involved in various troubles and calamities, and obliged many of them, by threats and punishment to come over to the sect which he esteemed and protected. Among these forced proselytes was Liberius, the Roman pontiff, who was compelled to embrace Arianism in the year 357. The Nicene party meditated reprisals, and waited only a convenient time, a fit place, and a proper occasion, for executing their resentment. Thus the history of the church, under the emperor Constantius, presents to the reader a perpetual

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scene of tumult and violence, and the deplorable spectacle of a war carried on between brothers, without religion, justice, or humanity.

Under Julian and Jovian.

XV. The death of Constantius, in the year 362, changed considerably the face of religious affairs, and diminished greatly the strength and influence of the Arian party. Julian, who, by his principles, was naturally prevented from taking a part in the controversy, bestowed his protection on neither side, but treated them both with an impartiality which was the result of a perfect indifference. Jovian, his successor, declared himself in favour of the Nicene doctrine; and immediately the whole west, with a considerable part of the eastern provinces, changed sides, conformed to the decrees of the council of *Nice*, and abjured the Arian system.

Under Valentinian and Valens.

The scene, however, changed again in the year 364, when Valentinian, and his brother Valens, were raised to the empire. Valentinian adhered to the decrees of the Nicene council: and hence the whole Arian sect, a few churches excepted, was destroyed and extirpated in the west. Valens, on the other hand favoured the Arians, and his zeal for their cause exposed their adversaries, the Nicenians, in the eastern provinces, to many severe trials and sufferings. These troubles, however, ended with the reign of this emperor, who fell in a battle which was fought against the Goths in the year 378, and was succeeded by Gratian, a friend to the Nicenians, and the restorer of their tranquillity. His zeal for their interests, though fervent and active, was surpassed by that of his successor, Theodosius the Great, who raised the secular arm against the Arians, with a terrible degree of violence, drove them from their churches, enacted laws, whose severity exposed them to the greatest calamities

ties [z], and rendered, throughout his dominions, the decrees of the council of *Nice* triumphant over all opposition; so that the public profession of the Arian doctrine was confined to the barbarous and unconquered nations, such as the Burgundians, Goths, and Vandals.

During this long and violent contest between the Nicenians and Arians, the attentive and impartial will acknowledge, that unjustifiable measures were taken, and great excesses committed on both sides. So that when, abstracting from the merits of the cause, we only consider with what temper, and by what means the parties defended their respective opinions, it will be difficult to determine which of the two exceeded most the bounds of probity, charity, and moderation.

Various sects of Arians.

XVI. The efforts of the Arians to maintain their cause, would have been much more prejudicial to the church than they were in effect, had not the members of that sect been divided among themselves, and torn into factions, which regarded each other with the bitterest aversion. Of these the ancient writers make mention under the names of Semi-arians, Eusebians, Aetians, Eunomians, Acasians, Psathyrians, and others; but they may all be ranked with the utmost propriety, into three classes. The first of these were the primitive and genuine Arians, who, rejecting all those forms and modes of expression which the moderns had invented to render their opinions less shocking to the Nicenians, taught simply, "That "the Son *was not begotten of the Father*, (i. e. "produced out of his substance), *but only created* "*out of nothing*." This class was opposed by the Semi-arians, who, in their turn, were abandoned by the Eunomians, or Anomæans, the disciples of Ætius and Eunomius, of whom the latter was eminent for his knowledge and penetration.

[z] See *Codex Theodosianus*, tom. vi. p. 5, 10, 130, 146; as also Godofred's Annotations thereupon.

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The Semi-arians held, *that the Son was* ὁμοιούσιος, i. e. *similar to the Father in his essence, not by nature, but by a peculiar privilege;* and the leading men of this party were, George of *Laodicea*, and Basilius of *Ancyra* [*a*]. The Eunomians, who were also called Aetians and Exucontians, and may be counted in the number of pure Arians, maintained, that Christ was ἑτεροούσιος, or ἀνόμοιος, i. e. unlike the Father, as well in his essence, as in other respects [*b*]. Under this general division, many other subordinate sects were comprehended, whose subtilties and refinements have been but obscurely developed by the ancient writers. The Arian cause suffered as much from the discord and animosities that reigned among these sects, as from the laboured confutations and the zealous efforts of the orthodox party.

The Apollinarian heresy.

XVII. The Arian controversy produced new sects, occasioned by the indiscreet lengths to which the contending parties pushed their respective opinions. And such, indeed, are too generally the unhappy effects of disputes, in which human passions have so large a part. Some, while they were careful in avoiding, and zealous in opposing, the sentiments of Arius, ran headlong into systems of doctrine of an equally dangerous and pernicious nature. Others in defending the Arian notions, went further than their chief, and thus fell into errors much more extravagant than those which he maintained. Thus does it generally happen in religious controversies: the human mind, amidst its present imperfection and infirmity, and its unhappy subjection to

[*a*] See Prud. Maran's *Dissert. sur. les Semi-arians,* of which the learned Voigt has given a second edition in his *Biblioth. Hæresiolog.* tom. ii. p. 119.

[*b*] See Basnage's *Dissert. de Eunomio,* in the *Lectiones Antiquæ* of Canisius, tom. i. p. 172. where we find the *confession* and *apology* of Eunomius yet extant. See also Jo. Alb. Fabric. *Bibliotheca Græc.* vol. viii. p. 100—148. and the *Codex. Theodos.* tom. vi. p. 147, 155, 157, 167, 200, &c.

to the empire of imagination and the dictates of sense, rarely follows the middle way in the search of truth, or contemplates spiritual and divine things with that accurateness and simplicity, that integrity and moderation, which alone can guard against erroneous extremes.

Among those who fell into such extremes by their inconsiderate violence in opposing the Arian system, Apollinaris the younger, bishop of *Laodicea*, may be justly placed, though otherwise a man of distinguished merit, and one whose learned labours had rendered to religion the most important services. He defended strenuously the *divinity* of Christ against the Arians; but, by indulging himself too freely in philosophical distinctions and subtilties, he was carried so far as to deny, in some measure, his *humanity*. He maintained, that the body which Christ assumed, was endowed with a *sensitive*, and not a *rational*, soul; and that the Divine Nature performed the functions of reason, and supplied the place of what we call the *mind*, the spiritual and intellectual principle in man. And from this it seemed to follow, as a natural consequence, that the *Divine Nature* in Christ was blended with the *human*, and suffered with it the pains of crucifixion and death itself [*c*]. This great man was led astray, not only by his love of disputing, but also by an immoderate attachment to the Platonic doctrine, concerning the two-fold nature of the soul, which was too generally adopted by the divines of this age; and which, undoubtedly, perverted their judgment in several respects, and led them to erroneous and extravagant decisions on various subjects.

☞ [*c*] However erroneous the hypothesis of Apollinaris may have been, the consequences here drawn from it are not entirely just: for if it is true, that the human soul does not, in any respect, suffer death by the dissolution of the body, the same must hold good with respect to the divine nature.

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Other errors, beside that now mentioned, are imputed to Apollinaris by certain ancient writers; but it is not easy to determine how far they deserve credit upon that head [*d*]. Be that as it will, his doctrine was received by great numbers in almost all the eastern provinces, though by the different explications that were given of it, its votaries were subdivided into various sects. It did not, however, maintain its ground long; but, being attacked at the same time by the laws of the emperors, the decrees of councils, and the writings of the learned, it sunk, by degrees, under their united force.

Marcellus of Ancyra.

XVIII. Marcellus, bishop of *Ancyra*, in *Galatia*, may be ranked in the same class with Apollinaris, if we are to give credit to Eusebius of *Cæsarea*, and the rest of his adversaries, who represent his explication of the doctrine of the Trinity as bordering upon the Sabellian and Samosatenian errors. Many however are of opinion, that Eusebius of *Cæsarea* and the bishop of *Nicomedia*, who bore the same name, represented with partiality the sentiments of Marcellus, on account of the bitterness and vehemence which he discovered in his opposition to the Arians, and their protectors. But though it should be acknowledged, that, in some particulars, the accusations of his enemies carried an aspect of partiality and resentment, yet it is manifest, that they were far from being entirely groundless. For, if the doctrine of Marcellus be attentively examined, it will appear, that he considered the *Son*

[*d*] See Basnage's *Historia Hæresis Apollinaris*, published a second time by Voigt, in his *Bibliotheca Hæresiologica*, tom. i. fascic. i. p. 1—96. and improved by some learned and important additions. See also tom. i. fascic. iii. and p. 607. of this latter work. The laws that were enacted against the followers of Apollinaris, are extant in the *Theodosian Code*, tom. vi. p. 144. See an account of Apollinaris, and his *Heresy*, in the English edition of Bayle's *Dictionary*, at the article *Apollinaris*.

Son and the *Holy Ghost* as *two emanations* from the Divine Nature, which, after performing their respective offices, were to return again into the *substance* of the Father; and every one will perceive, at first sight, how incompatible this opinion is with the belief of *three distinct Persons in the Godhead.* Besides this, a particular circumstance, which augmented considerably the aversion of many to Marcellus, as also the suspicion of his erring in a capital manner, was his obstinately refusing, towards the conclusion of his life, to condemn the tenets of his disciple Photinus [*e*].

The sect of Photinus.

XIX. Photinus, bishop of *Sirmium*, may, with propriety, be placed at the head of those whom the Arian controversy was the occasion of seducing into the most extravagant errors. This prelate published, in the year 343, his opinions concerning the Deity, which were equally repugnant to the Orthodox and Arian systems. His notions, which have been but obscurely, and indeed sometimes inconsistently represented by the ancient writers, amount to this, when attentively examined; "That Jesus Christ was born of "the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Mary; that "a certain *divine emanation*, or ray (which he "called the *word*) descended upon this extraor- "dinary man; that, on account of the union of "the *divine word* with his *human nature*, Jesus "was called the *Son of God*, nay, *God* himself; "and that the *Holy Ghost* was not a distinct *per-* "*son*, but a celestial *virtue* proceeding from the "Deity." The temerity of this bold innovator was chastised, not only by the Orthodox in the councils of *Antioch* [*f*] and *Milan*, held in the years

[*e*] See Montfaucon's *Diatriba de Caussa Marcelli in Nova Collectione Patrum Græcorum*, tom. ii. p. 58; as also Gervaise, *Vie de S. Epiphane*, p. 42.

☞ [*f*] According to Dr. Lardner's account, this council

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years 345 and 347, and in that of *Sirmium*, whose date is uncertain, but also by the Arians in one of their assemblies held at *Sirmium*, in the year 351. In consequence of all this, Photinus was degraded from the episcopal dignity, and died in exile in the year 372 [*g*].

The heresy of Macedonius.

XX. After him arose Macedonius, bishop of *Constantinople*, a very eminent Semi-arian doctor, who, through the influence of the Eunomians, was deposed by the council of *Constantinople*, in the year 360, and sent into exile, where he formed the sect of the Macedonians, or Pneumatomachians. In his exile, he declared with the utmost freedom those sentiments which he had formerly either concealed, or, at least, taught with much circumspection. He considered the *Holy Ghost* as "a *divine energy* diffused throughout the "universe, and not as a *person* distinct from the "*Father* and the *Son* [*h*]." This opinion had many partisans in the Asiatic provinces; but the council assembled by Theodosius, in the year 381, at *Constantinople* (to which the second rank among the *œcumenical*, or general councils is commonly attributed), put a stop by its authority to the growing evil, and crushed this rising sect before it had arrived at its full maturity. An hundred and fifty bishops, who were present at this council, gave the finishing touch to what the council of *Nice* had left imperfect, and fixed, in a full and determinate manner, the doctrine of

cil of *Antioch*, in 345, was held by the Arians, or Eusebians, and not by the Orthodox, as our author affirms. See Lardner's *Credibility*, &c. vol. ix. p. 13; see also Athanas. *De Synod. N.* vi. vii. compared with Socrat. lib. ii. cap. xviii. xix.

[*g*] Or in 375, as is concluded from Jerome's *Chronicle*.—Matt. Larroque, *De Photino, et ejus multiplici condemnatione.* Thom. Ittigius, *Historia Photini in App. ad librum de Hæresiarchis ævi Apostolici.*

[*h*] Socrates, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. iv. cap. iv.

of *three* Persons *in one* God, which is as yet received among the generality of Christians. This venerable assembly did not stop here; they branded, with infamy, all the errors, and set a mark of execration upon all the heresies, that were hitherto known; they advanced the bishop of *Constantinople*, on account of the eminence and extent of the city in which he resided, to the first rank after the Roman Pontiff, and determined several other points, which they looked upon as essential to the well-being of the church in general [*i*].

XXI. The frenzy of the ancient Gnostics, which had been so often vanquished, and in appearance, removed, by the various remedies that had been used for that purpose, broke out anew in *Spain*. It was transported thither, in the beginning of this century, by a certain person, named Marc of *Memphis*, in *Egypt*, whose converts at first were not very numerous. They increased, however, in process of time, and counted in their number several persons highly eminent for their learning and piety. Among others, Priscillian, a layman, distinguished by his birth, fortune, and eloquence, and afterwards bishop of *Abila*, was infected with this odious doctrine, and became its most zealous, and ardent defender. Hence he was accused by several bishops, and by a rescript obtained from the emperor Gratian, he was banished, with his followers, from *Spain* [*k*]; but was restored, some time after, by

The Priscillianists.

[*i*] Socratus. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. v. cap. viii. p. 624. Sozomen. *Hist. Eccles.* lib. vii. cap. vii. p. 711.

☞ [*k*] This banishment was the effect of a sentence pronounced against Priscillian, and some of his followers, by a synod convened at *Saragossa* in the year 380; in consequence of which, Idacius and Ithacius, two cruel and persecuting ecclesiastics, obtained from Gratian the receipt abovementioned. See Sulpic. Sever. *Hist. Sacr.* lib. ii. cap. xlvii. p. 283. edit. Leipsick, 8vo.

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by an edict of the same prince, to his country and his functions. His sufferings did not end here; for he was accused a second time in the year 384 [*l*], before Maximus, who had procured the assassination of Gratian, and made himself master of *Gaul;* and by the order of that prince, was put to death, at *Treves*, with some of his associates. The agents, however, by whose barbarous zeal this sentence was obtained, were justly regarded with the utmost abhorrence by the bishops of *Gaul* and *Italy* [*m*]; for Christians had not yet learned that giving over heretics to be punished by the magistrates, was either an act of piety or justice [*n*]. [No: This abominable doctrine was reserved for those times, when religion was to become an instrument of despotism, or a pretext for the exercise of malevolence, vengeance, and pride.]

The death of Priscillian was less pernicious to the progress of his opinions, than might naturally

☞ [*l*] Upon the death of Gratian, who had favoured Priscillian, towards the latter end of his reign, Ithacius presented to Maximus a petition against him; whereupon this prince appointed a *council* to be held at *Bourdeaux*, from which Priscillian appealed to the prince himself. Sulp. Sever. lib. ii. cap. xlix. p. 287.

☞ [*m*] It may be interesting to the reader to hear the character of the first person that introduced *civil* persecution into the Christian church. "He was a man abandoned to the "most corrupt indolence, and without the least tincture of "true piety. He was audacious, talkative, impudent, luxuri- "ous, and a slave to his belly. He accused as heretics, and "as protectors of Priscillian, all those whose lives were "consecrated to the pursuit of piety and knowledge, or dis- "tinguished by acts of mortification and abstinence," &c. Such is the character which Sulpitius Severus, who had an extreme aversion to the sentiments of Priscillian, gives us of Ithacius, bishop of *Sossuba* by whose means he was put to death.

[*n*] See Sulp. Sever. *Hist. Sacr.* edit. Leips. 8vo, 1709. where Martin, the truly apostolical bishop of *Tours*, says to Maximus, *Novum esse et inauditum nefas ut causam ecclesiæ judex seculi judicaret.* See also *Dial.* iii. *De vita Martini*, cap. xi. p. 495.

turally have been expected. His doctrine not only survived him, but was propagated through the greatest part of *Spain* and *Gaul*. And even so far down as the sixth century, the followers of this unhappy man gave much trouble to the bishops and clergy in these provinces.

Their doctrine.

XXII. None of the ancient writers have given an accurate account of the doctrine of the Priscillians. Many, on the contrary, by their injudicious representations of it, have highly disfigured it, and added new degrees of obscurity to a system which was before sufficiently dark and perplexed. It appears, however, from authentic records, that the difference between their doctrine, and that of the Manicheans, was not very considerable. For, "they denied the *reality* of "Christ's birth and incarnation; maintained "that the visible universe was not the production "of the Supreme Deity, but of some *dæmon*, "or malignant principle; adopted the doctrine "of *æons*, or emanations, from the divine nature; "considered human bodies as prisons formed "by the author of evil, to enslave celestial "minds; condemned marriage, and disbelieved "the resurrection of the body." Their rule of life and manners was rigid and severe; and the accounts which many have given of their lasciviousness and intemperance deserve not the least credit, as they are totally destitute of evidence and authority. That the Priscillianists were guilty of dissimulation upon some occasions, and deceived their adversaries by cunning stratagems, is true; but that they held it as a maxim, that lying and perjury were *lawful*, is a most notorious falsehood, without even the least shadow of probability [o], however commonly this odious doctrine

[o] See Simon de Vries, *Dissert. Critica de Priscillianistis*, printed at *Utrecht*, in the year 1745, in 4to. The only defect in this dissertation is the implicit manner in which the author

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doctrine has been laid to their charge. In the heat of controversy, the eye of passion and prejudice is too apt to confound the principles and opinions of men with their practice.

Inferior sects.

XXIII. To what we have here said concerning those famous sects which made a noise in the world, it will not be improper to add some account of those of a less considerable and inferior kind.

Ardæus, a man of remarkable virtue, being excommunicated in *Syria*, on account of the freedom and importunity with which he censured the corrupt and licentious manners of the clergy, formed an assembly of those who were attached to him, and became, by his own appointment, their bishop. Banished into *Scythia*, by the emperor, he went among the Goths, where his sect flourished, and augmented considerably. The ancient writers are not agreed about the time in which we are to date the origin of this sect. With respect to its religious institutions, we know that they differed in some points from those observed by other Christians: and, particularly, that the followers of Ardæus celebrated Easter, or the Paschal feast, with the Jews, contrary to the express decree of the council of *Nice*. With respect to their doctrine, several errors have been imputed to them [*p*], and this, among others, that they attributed to the Deity a human form.

XXIV.

author follows Beausobre's *History of the Manicheans*, taking every thing for granted which is affirmed in that work. See also Franc. Girvesii *Historia Priscillianistarum Chronologica*, published at *Rome* in the year 1750, in 8vo. We find, moreover, in the twenty-seventh volume of the *Opusculum Scientificum* of Angelus Calogera, a treatise entitled, *Bachiarus Illustratus, seu de Priscilliana Hæresi dissertatio*; but this dissertation appears rather intended to clear up the affair of Bachiarus, than to give a full account of the Priscillianists and their doctrine.

[*p*] Epiphanius, *Hæres.* lxx. p. 811. Augustin. *De Hæres.* cap. l. Theodoret. *Fabul. Hæret.* lib. iv. cap. ix. p. 671.

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Messalians, or Euchites.

XXIV. The Grecian and Oriental writers place, in this century, the rise of the sect of the Messalians, or Euchites, whose doctrine and discipline were, indeed, much more ancient, and subsisted, even before the birth of Christ, in *Syria*, *Egypt*, and other eastern countries, but who do not seem to have been formed into a religious body before the latter end of the age of which we now write. These fanatics, who lived after the monkish fashion, and withdrew from all commerce and society with their fellow-creatures, seem to have derived their name from their habit of continual *prayer*. "They imagined, that the mind of "every man was inhabited by an *evil dæmon*, "whom it was impossible to expel by any other "means than by constant prayer and singing of "hymns: and that, when this malignant spirit "was cast out, the *pure mind* returned to God, "and was again united to the *Divine Essence* from "whence it had been separated." To this leading tenet they added many other enormous opinions, which bear a manifest resemblance of the Manichean doctrine, and are evidently drawn from the same source from whence the Manicheans derived their errors, even from the tenets of the Oriental philosophy [*q*]. In a word, the Euchites were a sort of Mystics, who imagined, according to the Oriental notion, that two souls resided in man, the one *good*, and the other *evil;* and who were zealous in hastening the return of the good spirit

p. 671. Jo. Joach. Schroder. *Dissertat. de Ardœanis,* published in Voigt's *Bibliothecæ Historia Hæresiolog.* tom. i. part III. p. 578.

[*q*] Epiphanius, *Hæres.* lxxx. p. 1067. Theodoret. *Hæret. Fabul.* lib. iv. cap. x. p. 672. Timotheus, *Presbyter de receptione Hæreticor.* published in the third volume of Cotelerius' *Monumenta Ecclesia Græcæ,* p. 403. Jac. Tolli. *Insignia itineris Italici,* p. 110. Assemanni *Bibliotheca Orientalis Vaticana,* tom. i. p. 128. tom. iii. part II. p. 172, &c.

spirit to God, by contemplation and prayer. The external air of piety and devotion, which accompanied this sect, imposed upon many, while the Greeks, on the other hand, opposed it with vehemence in all succeeding ages.

It is proper to observe here, that the title of Messalians and Euchites had a very extensive application among the Greeks and the Orientals, who gave it all to those who endeavoured to raise the soul to God by recalling and withdrawing it from all terrestrial and sensible objects; however these enthusiasts might differ from each other in their opinions and other subjects.

The Antidico-marianites and the Collyridians.

XXV. Towards the conclusion of this century, two opposite sects involved *Arabia* and the adjacent countries in the troubles and tumults of a new controversy. These jarring factions went by the names of Antidico-marianites and Collyridians. The former maintained, that the Virgin Mary did not always preserve her immaculate state, but received the embraces of her husband Joseph after the birth of Christ. The latter, on the contrary, who were singularly favoured by the female sex, running into the opposite extreme, worshipped the Blessed Virgin as a goddess, and judged it necessary to appease her anger, and seek her favour and protection, by libations, sacrifices, and oblations of *cakes (collyridæ)*, and such like services [*r*].

Other sects might be mentioned here, but they are too obscure and inconsiderable to deserve notice.

[*r*] See Epiphan. *Hæres.* lxxviii, lxxix. p. 1003. and 1057.

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